Meat trays, marginalisation and the mechanisms of social capital creation: An ethnographic study of a licensed social club and its older users

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIGR	Australian Institute for Gambling Research
CCCANZ	Council of Community Clubs of Australia and New Zealand
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
IPART	Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
NH&MRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NSW	New South Wales
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLGR	NSW Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing
PC	Productivity Commission
RCA (NSW)	NSW Registered Clubs Association
RSL	Returned and Services League
WHO	World Health Organisation

LIST OF TEXTUAL CONVENTIONS

The following conventions have been used in the transcription of interviews, with examples highlighted in grey[1].

Convention	Explanation	Example
Punctuation added to aid readability	Punctuation symbols have been added to transcribed speech to aid readability. These include commas, full stops, capitalisation, question marks and other punctuation. Question marks, for example, are used where the audible text ended with a rising tone, or where the grammar had the structure of a question (who, what, when, where, why, how, and so on).	*Myra:* You say "Hello, how are you?" G or something like that: "Any luck today?" "No" [p] but I <u>think</u> it is <u>really</u> the <u>company</u>.
Underlining represents stress patterns in speech	Words are underlined which are stressed or accented by the speaker. Stress patterns are a feature of intonation which conveys meaning (Halliday, 1985). In order to preserve as much meaning as practical when transcribing spoken into written language, I have tried to represent elements of intonation which "contribute to a distinction in meaning" (Hawkins, 1984, p.197).	*Tom:* I <u>keep</u> going as long as I <u>can</u> ….There's <u>nothing</u> - there's nothing to <u>do</u>. Only - if you <u>cut</u> out <u>smoking</u>, God, I don't know <u>what</u> I'd.... Well, that's is all you can <u>enjoy</u>, is a <u>smoke</u> and a bit of nice <u>food</u> [p] and a <u>beer</u>. [p] If you <u>haven't</u> got <u>that</u>, what <u>have</u> you got?

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[1] These conventions are in common use (see, for example, ten Have, 1999 and Flick, 2006).

'[pause]' or '[p]' indicates pausing by the speaker	Indicates the speaker has paused for more than a usual length of time.	*Ruby:* We'd [laughs] you'd never believe it, we used to go to all the- [pause] all the Bingo places, bingo place everywhere they play Bingo. We'd go to the RSL in the morning and then we'd finish there and then <u>rush</u> from there up to the senior citizens
'[inaudible]' indicates inaudible speech	Speech can be heard, but its meaning cannot be determined. This may be because it is too faint or because there is interference from another sound source.	*Thea:* I suppose <u>I</u> didn't go to the club at <u>all</u> 'till <u>this</u> club [was rebuilt]. And I [inaudible] started coming it looked such attractive place, I thought "ooh, I'll go <u>there</u> for coffee instead of the café.
Comments in square brackets indicate additional notes by interviewer or transcriber	Text in square brackets may represent my comments that explain non-audible features of the interview interaction. This was generally only used when it was necessary to prevent ambiguity.	*Myra:* No, I, ah, … <u>friends</u> are very hard to find. <u>Real</u> friends … and to me, that's - that's different [we are approached by a child dressed as Dorothy the Dinosaur] She's got a … tail! Yes, now I've seen everything.
Ellipsis indicates omitted word or words	This is a convention used in the representation of transcript extracts as they occur in this thesis. An ellipsis is used to indicate an omitted word or words.	*Mary:* Takes me ages to get a shower and get dressed, make the bed and then come and get my breakfast. …I leave here roundabout nine, … by the time I walk up there, I might have five minutes, ten minutes to wait for a taxi. (Mary interview)

Name of speaker is in italics followed by colon	Extracts from transcripts indicate the speaker's name before their speech.	*Virginia:* How important would you say the club is to you, in your life, then? *Olive:* I think it's a good outlet because it's somewhere to go…

SUMMARY

Alongside informal networks of friends and family, formal social groupings such as voluntary associations are valued by older people as opportunities for engagement. In Australia, one such grouping is the licensed social (or 'registered') club. Approximately 20 per cent of all older Australians, and 80 per cent of older residents of the state of New South Wales, actively participate in such clubs. Despite this, older people's registered club participation has received little scholarly attention.
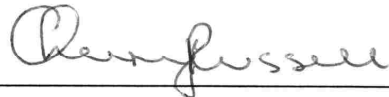
This ethnographic study of one particular registered club aimed to discover the nature, meaning and role of club participation for its older members. Social capital existing in club-based networks emerged as a further investigative focus, and its mechanisms and outcomes were examined. Participant observation and in-depth interviewing were the main data collection methods used. Data analysis procedures included thematic analysis (based loosely on grounded theory methodology), as well as the more context-sensitive narrative analysis and key-words-in-context analysis.

The study found that club participation enabled older members to maintain valued social networks, self-reliance and a sense of autonomy. Social networks were characterised by social capital of the bonding type, being largely homogeneous with respect to age, gender, (working) class and cultural background. Strong cohesive bonds were characterised by intimacy and reciprocity, and possessed norms including *equality* and the norm of *tolerance and inclusiveness.* These helped to minimise conflict and build cohesiveness, while protecting older club-goers from increasing marginalisation within the club. Peer grouping within this mainstream setting may have shielded the older club-goers from stigma associated with participation in old-age specific groups.

The nature and scale of registered club participation amongst older Australians points to their unique and important role. The findings of this research indicate that – for at least this group of older men and women - club use is a major contributor to maintaining social connectedness and a sense of self as self-reliant, autonomous and capable. In the context of an ageing population, Australia's registered clubs feature in the mosaic of resources available to older people, and their communities, for the creation of social capital.

CERTIFICATION
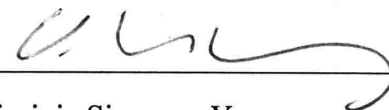
I, Dr. Cherry Russell, certify that the PhD thesis entitled *Meat trays, marginalisation and the mechanisms of social capital creation: an ethnographic study of a licensed social club and its older users*, by Virginia Simpson-Young, is in a form suitable for examination.

Dr Cherry Russell

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, Virginia Simpson-Young, certify that this thesis, Meat trays, marginalisation and the mechanisms of social capital creation: an ethnographic study of a licensed social club and its older users is my own work. It is based on original data gained from my own research. It contains no material that has been written or published by another person, except where acknowledgment is made. This work has not been submitted or accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. All research practices involved with this thesis were approved by the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee.

Virginia Simpson-Young

A life of quality is achieved when an older person can adopt

strategies that allow enough, and sufficiently well-founded,

connections to the social and material fabric of everyday life

(Peace, Holland & Kellaher, 2003, p.3).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Millions of Australians, a disproportionately large number of whom are older people, are members of one of the several thousand registered clubs - licensed social clubs - in local urban and rural communities. These clubs[2] have been described as "groups of people having a common interest who have bonded together to pursue or promote that interest" (RCA NSW, 1999, p.5 in The Allen Consulting Group, 2004, p.7). By establishing a licensed premises, the club provides hospitality services, such as drinking facilities, gambling, meals and other hospitality services to members (ABS, 2006, p.15), as well as providing "a diverse range of leisure and cultural activities" (Stoneham, 1999).

Background to the Research

I first became aware of the central role played by registered clubs in the lives of older club-goers during my time working for an organisation which supported volunteer-run social groups for "frail and socially isolated" older people. One day a week for four hours, older members were brought by community transport to meet with volunteers (usually older people themselves) and with each other at a local venue - often a registered club - to interact informally with each other, as well as to participate in activities we believed would be beneficial for them, including "mental stimulation" activities and "gentle exercises". As I visited these groups dotted around the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW), I became familiar with the local communities, and I became aware of the central role played by the local clubs in those towns and suburbs.

My preconceptions of clubs had been very different from what I came to know. Clubs had been, for me, a taken-for-granted part of the Australian social landscape. I shared the commonly held stereotype of clubs as places where old working class men, and to a lesser

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[2] In this thesis, I will usually use the word "club" in place of "registered club". In cases where there is a risk of ambiguity, I will clarify which sort of club is being referred to.

extent, women, went to drink, smoke and play the 'pokies'[3] or bet on the horse-racing (Oxley, 1978; Bennett, Emmison & Frow, 1999). Like many younger middle class people, I had little idea what was really going on inside a club, having scoffed at the idea of ever attending one.

As I spent time with older club-goers, both inside and outside clubs, I became aware of the centrality of the club in many of their lives. Many had joined their local club decades before, some on their or their spouse's return from World War II. For many, their social lives revolved around the club and around other club-goers. Many visited frequently, some daily, to meet friends, play bowls, bingo, the poker machines, have a meal or a drink. Some attended with their spouse, some with friends or family, and some alone – knowing they were likely to run into someone they knew, or to chat with friendly staff. I heard about how the club had become increasingly important as these people got older. Other opportunities had fallen away over the years, especially for those who had lost a spouse, or who had relocated into a new area. Those who could no longer drive, or who no longer had a driving partner, appreciated the convenience of the club's courtesy bus. Many appreciated, too, the generously proportioned meals available for lunch and dinner at affordable prices. I saw also the role of the club in supporting local services, such as the one I worked with, including providing rooms free of charge for them to hold meetings, lending the club's bus for outings, or putting on a luncheon for a group's special occasion.

When I saw the centrality of clubs in older club-goers' lives – especially in the lives of working class older people, as they almost invariably were - I became interested in finding out more about the nature, meaning and role of club participation for older people. When I decided to do a postgraduate research degree my supervisor, Dr Cherry Russell, encouraged me to explore clubs further. She had suspected that they provided a rich source of data about older people's social participation – of particular interest since the context is, unlike that of so much gerontological research – a "mainstream" context (Russell, 1996, p.53-4).

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[3] "Poker machines" are commonly known as "pokies" in NSW. Livingstone (2005a) describes them: "Australian poker machines or EGMs need to be differentiated from slot machines that may be familiar in some other jurisdictions. Australian machines are fully electronic, controlled by buttons or touch-screens, and characterised by a capacity to bet on multiple lines (20 line machines are common) and using multiple credits (or multiples of the nominal denomination of the machine). They are capable of consuming well in excess of $1,200 per hour" (Livingstone, 2005a, p.523). In the Unites States similar machines are known as "slot machines", and in the United Kingdom as "fruit machines".

Research Questions

This study, then, sought to investigate the nature, meaning and role of registered club participation. An ethnographic study of a particular club was chosen to address the specific questions: *How do the older club-goers use the club – their activities, interactions, spatiotemporal patterns of use?; How do the older people experience and interpret their involvement in the club?,* and *What role does the club play in the broader context of the older club-goer's life?* A better understanding of this is important for understanding the Australian ageing experience, not simply because of the scale of older people's registered club participation, but because it might shed light more generally on aspects of social participation, and of associational participation in particular. As the research progressed, I became aware of the potential value in using the concept of social capital as an organising framework. An additional research question (which arose during data analysis and which informed further interpretation) sought to identify, for this setting, mechanisms of social capital creation, and outcomes of that social capital for the older club-goers.

An ethnographic methodology was chosen since it is most appropriate for gaining access to the understandings of older club-goers, and for obtaining information about the social and other contexts in which club-going takes place – that is, "perspectives in action" in addition to "perspectives of action" (Snow & Anderson, 1987, p.1343). Participant observation over a four and a half year period at one particular Sydney suburban club, The Langley Ex-Services and Community Club[4], and in-depth interviews with ten theoretically sampled older club-goers provided data which were then analysed using a number of qualitative data analysis techniques to build up an ethnographic account of older people's club-use. The phenomenon was interpreted within a social capital framework which yielded insights into the means by which registered club participation provided access to social and other resources to manage the impact of later life changes on social participation, the practicalities of everyday life and, more broadly, on social integration and social inclusion.

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[4] The name of the suburb in which the club is located has been changed to prevent the club being identified, as has the names of surrounding suburbs. Clubs which are located in these suburbs are also given pseudonyms.

Overview of the Thesis

The title of this thesis, *Meat-trays, marginalisation and the mechanism of social capital creation*, reflects several aspects of the findings. 'Meat-trays' represents the role of the club in the everyday lives of the older club-goers - how it is significant in managing the nuts and bolts of everyday life (such as obtaining highly-valued meat as bingo prizes), while at the same time being involved with social processes, such as using the meat-tray as a means of assisting daughters to manage their households. It represents the fact that the practical is not divorced from the social or even, perhaps, the symbolic.   The 'marginalisation' of the thesis title refers to the position of these older largely working class people both in the club and in the wider society.   It points to the role that the club plays in enabling social inclusion despite the club-goers' marginal status.   And the final 'M' is for 'mechanisms of social capital creation', which operate at the club – as they must anywhere there is social capital – and which I describe in Chapter Seven.   An ethnographic methodology has made it possible to observe such processes in action.

This research report is structured in the following way: Chapter Two describes the background to the research by considering the strategies older people use to manage later life change - strategies involving participation in voluntary associations in particular (including registered clubs).   The concept of social capital is then considered in relation to the circumstances of older people and applied to voluntary associations.   Chapter Three then addresses the choice of methodology which was made to examine registered club participation.   The next three chapters report the Findings: Chapter Four describes the Langley Club which is the site of this research, as well as providing information about the Langley Club-goers themselves, their club-based activities and the social action associated with their activities.   In Chapter Five, the relationships of the older people who attend the club are examined in greater depth.   Club-based social networks involving friends, family, acquaintances and the club itself are described after first looking at the network access process.   The functioning of the networks is then considered with a particular focus on norms of *equality* and *tolerance and inclusiveness* which foster connections between network members.   Chapter Six describes the operation of the social networks, as they function in the particular context, to create resources which are available for the older club-goers to utilise in the management of their everyday lives.   This chapter describes how club-goers use club-based resources to maximise self-reliance and self-direction, valued goals for many people in later life. Chapter Seven is a discussion which draws together the findings and considers them in the light of the mechanisms of social capital creation and of

social capital outcomes. Place-based and network-based mechanisms (both structural and functional) are described, and outcomes, including the facilitation of access to resources and social connectedness, are considered.   Chapter Eight concludes my thesis with a presentation of some contributions and implications of the research, along with some suggestions for future research.

Having presented the background to this study – the circumstances leading to my interest in the topic and the research questions which arose - the next chapter further contextualises the study by reviewing the literature on social participation and social capital in later life.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN LATER LIFE

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Introduction

Older people's registered club participation occurs within the wider context of club-goers' social worlds. Later life change can present challenges for older people, to which adjustments must be made. To this end, older people make use of the social networks - family, friends, acquaintances and voluntary associations - within which they are embedded. It is in these networks that social capital is located, and may be available as a resource for the older person to assist with this adjustment process.

This chapter has three sections. The first section describes some aspects of the circumstances of older people, including losses common - although not restricted - to later life, and the adaptive processes which older people commonly go through in response. This first section also considers how these processes are mediated by structural and environmental factors. Social participation within social networks is singled out here as a strategy of particular relevance to this research.

The second section looks at participation in voluntary associations in particular, and considers how participation in this type of social network functions both socially and instrumentally for participants. The networks existing in voluntary associations account for the social participation of many older people, facilitating access to social and practical resources as well as being a potential source of social integration. Although older people can access many age-mixed voluntary associations, participation is often in age-segregated associations, or in homogeneous networks within age-mixed associations. Following that, clubs are considered as a particular instance of a voluntary association, and are described and further explored in relation to the themes already presented in relation to voluntary associations.

The third section addresses social capital and considers the relevance of the concept to understanding associational participation in general, and club participation in particular. I will conclude this chapter by highlighting the questions raised by this consideration of the significance of associational participation in clubs for the social capital available to older club-goers.

Section I: Change and Adjustment in Later Life

This section provides an overview of common challenges faced by older people and common strategies employed to adjust to such challenges. Later life events such as bereavement and the onset of illness or disability necessitate change and adaptation (Rybash, Roodin & Hoyer, 1995), and older people actively make adjustments to manage such change in order to regain a sense of equilibrium (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Baltes & Carstensen, 1996). As Godfrey, Townsend & Denby (2004) observes:

> Older people are seeking to make sense of, and are actively engaged in, a process of adaptation to physical, social, interpersonal and psychological changes, embracing both learning and adjustment (Godfrey et al., 2004, p.3).

This section begins by describing some later life changes which typically involve loss; such as bereavement, retirement, residential relocation and changes in functional health. Other threats to older people's quality of life are then considered, including those arising from changes in the environmental and social context that may affect social integration.

The second part of this section considers the strategies employed by older people in adapting to these changed circumstances, as well as how particular structural factors mediate those adjustment processes. Later life changes impact broadly in social and practical life domains, and in the person-environment relationship. Adjustments are made in these domains, and this is done within the constraints posed by the older person's position within the wider socio-cultural context (such as by class and gender). Older people utilise their social networks - friends, family, neighbours, acquaintances, even strangers, as well as organisations such as workplaces and voluntary associations – in the process of managing later life change.

Challenges Common in Later Life

Later life has been characterised as a changing balance between gains and losses (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). Even though personal growth continues throughout the lifecourse (Carr, 2004), it remains the case that "the plight of old age is very real, embracing losses in physical, cognitive and social domains" (Baltes & Carstensen, 1996, p.398). Later life changes may have an impact on a range of life domains, including the social and practical, as well as the older person's broader integration into society and interaction with his or her environment. Losses common in later life impact the older person's social network and leisure activities, often reducing opportunities for social interaction (Kelly, 1990; Findlay, 2003; Cattan, White, Bond & Learmouth, 2005; AIHW, 2007a). Social networks tend to shrink in older age - the young are more likely to report social contact than the old (Baum, Bush, Modra, Murray, Cox, Alexander & Potter, 2000b). Some losses affect the older person's capacity to manage activities of daily living, and the experience of 'everyday life', that is, "the ordinary rhythms of daily living, … the working thoughts, feelings, and actions that make up the aging experience in the first place" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p.3). Further, societal attitudes about ageing and older people impact the extent to which older people are involved in society, and experience themselves as a valued member of society, and hence their social integration. I will now briefly consider some common later life events and some consequences for older people.

Loss events can happen at any age, but some are most often associated with later life (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 1991). Such events include the death of friends and relatives, particularly the spouse; retirement from work and other causes of loss of occupation; relocation and other changes in living arrangements; financial restrictions; reduced opportunities for activity participation and hence social involvement; as well as ageism, negative attitudes and stereotyping.

Bereavement

The loss of significant relationships through the death of friends and family - particularly the spouse – is likely to have a wide-ranging impact within the personal, social and practical domains of an older person's life. Although negative consequences are not inevitable (Aday, Kehoe & Farney, 2006), they are nevertheless common; and include an increased risk of morbidity and mortality (Prigerson, Maciejewski & Rosenheck, 2000). In addition, widowhood, and other circumstances in which personal relationships are lost, generally impacts negatively on social participation (AIHW, 2007a), eroding social

contacts (WHO, 2007). This is particularly the case for older men who face "distinct challenges" in maintaining social participation in such circumstances (Davidson, Daly & Arber, 2003, p.82). Feelings of isolation can result from network disruption associated with bereavement (Schnittker, 2007) and loneliness may be experienced by those for whom loss is associated with a greater amount of time spent alone (AIHW, 2007a). Furthermore, the availability of social support is impacted by social loss. The absence of social support is associated with poorer health, increased mortality, and an increased likelihood of entering residential care (Edelbrock, Buys, Waite, Grayson, Broe & Creasey, 2001; McCallum, Simons & Simons, 2003).

Retirement

Retirement from employment and other losses of occupation, such as the cessation of caregiving responsibilities, are common in later life and can have profound consequences. Thompson, Itzin & Abendstern (1990) observe that:

> Work, paid or unpaid, is one of the commonest ways in which men and women make sense of their lives. Work both gives purpose to daily activity, and generates meaningful relationships. The possible absence of work is consequently amongst the most central challenges of later life. (Thompson et al., 1990, p.137).

Although retirement may be a positive experience (Atchley, 1977; Fennell, Phillipson & Evers, 1988; Russell, 1995a), for some older people it is associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes (Dhaval, Rashad & Spasojevic, 2006). The loss of work-based relationships – which often do not carry over into the non-work domain - can reduce social networks, threatening social integration (Scharf, Phillipson, Kingston & Smith, 2001; Cornwell, Laumann & Schumm, 2008).

Reduced financial resources, often a consequence of retirement (Dunsford & Rice, 2004), can inhibit the ability to participate in social and recreational activities (Silver, 2007), thereby reducing access to associated social interaction, support, activity and pleasure. The experience and management of *time* may also be affected by retirement. Paid employment tends to structure time around a working day and working week, and retirement generally reduces the older person's commitment to strictly scheduled activities (Katz, 2000); the loss of other occupational roles, such as caring duties, may have a similar effect. The removal of imposed routine is generally favourably received (Coleman, Ivani-

Chalian & Robinson, 1998; Fennell et al., 1988) - nevertheless managing the re-ordering of daily life can present a challenge[5].

Residential Relocation

A change in living arrangements, such as relocation from one community to another, can be a disruptive life experience (Boyce, Wethington & Moen, 2003). Although outcomes depend on a number of factors, including whether or not relocation is voluntary (Oswald & Rowles, 2006), residential relocation generally involves "new places, new faces and new norms" (Kahana & Kahana, 1983, p.215]). This has consequences for social network size and composition, daily routines and availability of social support (Johnson, 1999; Rossen & Knafl, 2003).

Loss of Health or Functional Capacity

Another common experience in later life is change in health or functional status. More than half of all Australians aged over sixty years have some form of disability (ABS, 2003a), potentially limiting their ability to participate socially (Berkman & Glass, 2000; Poortinga, 2006b; WHO, 2007) and hence limiting opportunities for enjoying interaction and obtaining social support. The social consequences of disability are not equally distributed amongst older people. With respect to gender, although older women may have greater difficulty accessing social and leisure opportunities because of higher rates of disability (Pain, Mowl & Talbot, 2000; Arber, Perren & Davidson, 2002), older men tend to have fewer social contacts (Stevens, 1995). With respect to social class, there is an intersection with age, so that working class older people are more likely to experience disability and ill health in later life than people from higher socioeconomic status (SES) groups (Arber et al., 2002). Challenges posed by disability and ill-health are compounded by both a lack of financial resources and living alone – a situation which is most common in older women and has been referred to as "triple jeopardy" (Kendig, 1990). Maintaining equality in relationships (Dowd, 1975; (Crohan & Antonucci, 1989), including with adult children (Sherman, 2000; Victor, 2005), can be adversely affected by disability, as well as by financial limitations. A further social consequence of functional health difficulties is the experience, for some, of negative attributions resulting from the stigma associated with

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[5] The impact of later life change on the experience of time is evident in Hazan's (1980) observation that the older people in one Seniors Centre had a "preoccupation with the management of time" (p.1).

disability, a stigma which results from the failure to maintain a socially acceptable level of "body control" (Frank, 1995).

A major consequence of health problems in old age, and a focus of much gerontological interest, is their impact on the management of everyday life, and on activities of daily living in particular. Instrumental activities of daily living (Lawton & Brody, 1968), such as using transport, preparing meals and managing housework, may be threatened. Mobility restrictions may bring an end to driving or to using public transport, resulting in activity limitation (Fobker & Grotz, 2006; Tang, Fisher & Ehrlich, 1992; Morris, 1981). With regard to the process of obtaining and preparing food, older Australians have a high risk of under nutrition (Byles, Parkinson, Collins, Dart & D'Este, 2003) as a result of the physiological consequences of ageing, use of medications, reduced financial resources or social isolation (Visvanathan, Newbury & Chapman, 2004). Reduced mobility can make shopping and food preparation difficult (Russell, Touchard, Kendig & Quine, 2001, AIHW, 2007a), and changes in social circumstances, such as the death of a spouse (for whom one cooked, or who did the cooking) often lead to fundamental changes in the organisation of food related behaviour (Howarth, 1993). In addition, lowered physical ability can lead to increased concern about personal safety (Mackay, 1997), and older people are less able to take protective action in threatening situations (Grundy, 2006).

Environmental Challenges

Environmental factors such as features of the local community, the availability of services and other opportunities for interaction may present challenges for an ageing individual. This draws particular attention to the role of *context*. Contextual factors are explored by *environmental gerontology* (Kendig, 2003; Wahl & Weisman, 2003), which takes a person–environment perspective, drawing upon the idea that "old age is a period of adult development profoundly influenced and shaped by the environment" (Wahl, 2005, p.3). Older people may be vulnerable to demands from their environment as a result of age-related losses in vision, mobility, and cognitive capacity, and it is the demands of the environment which affect "everyday competence"- that is, the ability to function at any one time (Wahl, 2005)[6].

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[6] An implication of this perspective is that 'disability' is socially constructed: "The individual is being disabled, not by their impairment, but by the failure of society to take account of and organise around difference" (Dowling & Dolan, 2001, p.24, also Grenier, 2005).

The role of context in managing everyday life is clearly implicated in an environmental gerontological approach, but context impacts on the social and symbolic as well. Laws (1997) draws attention to the "spatiality of age relations":

> This is not to say simply that old people live in space. There is a much more powerful role for the spatial in the creation of ageing identities. The experience of being old, for example, varies according to one's environment. Situation can thus actively affect ageing (Laws, 1997, p.99)

The concept of *place* has become increasingly prominent in gerontology in recent years (Andrews, Cutchin, McCracken, Phillips & Wiles, 2007; Phillipson, 2007), yet research into older people's lives "often pays scant attention to places" (Salari, Brown & Eaton, 2006, p.239). Place – and the experience of it – is central to everyday life, being enmeshed in everyday routines (Seamon, 1979; Rosenbaum, Ward, Walker & Ostrom, 2007). In concert with (more widely researched) social networks, place impacts the health of individuals (Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner & Prothrow-Stith, 1997; Macintyre & Ellaway, 1999; Moore, Shiell, Haines, Riley & Collier, 2005).

An aspect of place which is important in later life, and presents challenges for the older person adapting to environmental demands, is the local area in which he or she lives. The nature of the older person's local community impacts on the experience of later life. The neighbourhood is the site where everyday activities are carried out (Forrest, 2004). Attachment to local community increases with age (Gilleard, Hyde & Higgs, 2007), and involvements become more locally focussed (Kelly, 1990; Russell, 1999; ABS, 1995; Krause, 2003; Gilleard et al., 2007; Phillipson, 2007).

As a result of mobility restrictions, concerns about personal safety and loss of companions (including potential drivers), many older people restrict the range of their involvements (Woodbridge, 2003; Blood, Enders, Jennett, Lupton, Tulloch, Tulloch & Brown, 1998; Fine & Thompson, 1995). In addition to increasing age, socioeconomic factors such as lower income and education[7] are factors in the greater use of local resources (Bennett et al., 1999).

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[7] Educational achievement is related to socioeconomic status - the higher the level of education, the greater the advantage (Kawachi, Subramanian & Almeida-Filho, 2002; Osborne, Ziersch & Baum, 2008).

The possibilities for action or "affordances" (Gibson, 1979) provided by the area in which an older person lives affect his or her ability to participate socially; as Gilleard & Higgs observe, "the lack of … neighbourhood resources creates obstacles to engagement with the broader social world" (2005, p.136). Older Australians participate in fewer activities outside the home than younger people. One third of people aged over 75 years, for example, had not attended a 'cultural' or 'leisure' venue in a twelve month period (ABS, 2007) - a pattern also observed in other countries (Menec, 2003). Environmental contextual factors contribute to this; mainstream activities in the community are often not accessible to people with disabilities because of physical barriers or the lack of transport options (Kendig, Helme, Teshuva, Osborne, Flicker & Browning, 1996; WHO, 2007). Features of particular venues may exclude certain groups of older people. Environments which are dominated by one gender may inhibit access by the other gender; women, for instance, may not be comfortable attending male dominated venues such as pubs, particularly when unaccompanied (Thompson et al., 1990). Conversely, men's participation in some contexts is inhibited by a perception of the dominance of older women in community spaces, such as senior citizens centres (Sixsmith & Boneham, 2003; Fennell & Davidson, 2003), and by the perception that in such organisation, "rather than members doing for others, members are done to by others" (Davidson et al., 2003, p.84). The World Health Organisation has pointed out that for social integration, opportunities must be provided for older people "to socialize and integrate with other age groups and cultures in their communities, activities and family" (WHO, 2007, p.42; also Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). Gerontologists have noted the need for meeting places for older people to assist in social integration, while warning that such places should not become "ghettos for the old", but rather be part of the mainstream (Thompson et al., 1990; WHO, 2007).

Reduced activity participation results in reduced opportunities for experiencing pleasure in later life – a factor which affects the older person's quality of life but which is often overlooked (Porter, 2005; Yarnal, Chick & Kerstetter, 2008). Yet this dimension is of fundamental importance to how everyday life is experienced. As Higgs, Hyde, Wiggins & Blane (2003) point out, in order to have a good quality of life, in addition to being able to "intervene" in their environment, individuals need to make use of resources "to pursue the reflexive process of self-realization through activities that make them happy", and experiencing "pleasure" is integral to this process (p.245). The old men in Rubinstein's study saw pleasure as central to everyday life: "for many, the idea was to experience each day fully and extract pleasure from it" (1986, p.38). Yet experiencing pleasure can be a

casualty of some of the difficulties which can arise in later life. Enjoyment, which "pulls together notions of pleasure and joy, and a sense of satisfaction", is restricted when activities are limited by poor health or financial restrictions (Grewal, Lewis, Flynn, Brown, Bond & Coast, 2006, p.1897). Engaging in activities because they are *fun* is not a motivation generally associated with adults (Vander Bilt, Dodge, Pandav, Shaffer & Ganguli, 2004; Yarnal, 2006) and least of all with the elderly, yet is an aspect of some activities undertaken by older people.

Aspects of the environment, such as the local environment, can present challenges for older people in managing later life change; the means by which older people make use of the environment to achieve this will be considered in a later section.

Reduction in social integration

Another challenge in later life is managing threats to social integration which may be a consequence of the life changes described above. Before considering this further, however, I must first address the question: What is social integration? Although there is no consensus (Pillemer, Moen, Wethington & Glasgow, 2000), there does appear to be a number of dimensions along which the meaning of 'social integration' varies. On one of these dimensions, unit of analysis, 'social integration' may be applied either to individuals or to classes of individuals (de Jong Gierveld & Hagestad, 2006). Given the focus of the present investigation, the first of these seems the most appropriate. On another of these dimensions, the term 'social integration' is used to refer to different types of connections. It is sometimes used to refer to the existence of connections between people and their close social network, and at other times it is used to refer to an individual's connections that reach out into the broader community. I will return to this distinction later in a discussion of social integration and voluntary associations. For the moment, I will make use of a simple definition of social integration as the "extent to which [older people] have opportunities to participate in mainstream society or are separated from it" (Rowland, 1991, p.6). This draws attention to both older people's relationships with others and to their connection into the wider society.

Social integration has been a "towering theme" in social science (Pillemer & Glasgow, 2000, p.19), and this is no less true of social gerontology. Gerontologists have long argued that social integration is problematic for older people. Rosow, for instance, proposed that "the most significant problems of older people … are intrinsically social. The basic issue is that of their social integration" (1967, p.8). More recently, Irwin (1999) notes that much

gerontological discourse has constructed the experience of later life as one of "social, cultural and economic marginalisation" (p.699). In a policy context, the United Nations has cautioned that "older people are at risk of being excluded, directly or indirectly, from community and social life" (UN Programme on Ageing & International Association of Gerontology, 2003, p.4).

As a group, older people are negatively valued, and individuals often experience ageism and stigmatisation. Segregation of older people from those in earlier life phases is common (Hearn, 1995; Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005; Knipscheer, 2006). In an age-stratified society (Giddens, 2006; Poole, 2003), older people tend to occupy one of the bottom rungs of the social ladder – a position of "subordinate marginality" (Dempsey, 1990b, p.12). This "systematic devaluation" of older people as a category is a threat to their social integration (Pillemer & Glasgow, 2000, p.23), leading some to conclude that the experience of later life may include exclusion and marginalisation in social, cultural and economic domains (Irwin, 1999; UN Programme on Ageing & International Association of Gerontology, 2003). Hagestad & Uhlenberg (2005) draw a connection between age segregation and ageism - "discrimination against older people on grounds of age" (Bytheway, 2005, p.361). Ageism is a consequence of the fact that "in general, individuals express predominantly negative attitudes and beliefs toward older adults" (Richeson & Shelton, 2006 p.175). Such "negative age identity" devalues older people within the social structure. Older people experience ageism in their daily lives "with demoralizing and limiting consequences" (Quine, Morrell & Kendig, 2007, p.322). For these reasons, advanced age may be a source of stigma (Russell, 1981).

Just as old age may be stigmatised, so too is membership in old age associations (Russell, 1981). It has been proposed that the reason that these groupings are stigmatised is that they inherit their stigma from their (stigmatised) members, who are generally old, women and working class (Russell, 1981; Davidson et al., 2003). The effect of the low status of older people's associations is that many older people "shun these venues" (Perren, Arber & Davidson, 2003, p.70; also Thompson et al., 1990). Associations which are not age-graded and hence are part of the mainstream are generally preferred by older people (Cheang, 2002). This theme will be revisited in a later section.

Some barriers to adequate social integration have been considered in the previous section - a lack of social participation which leads to lack of social integration (Pillemer et al., 2000). Structural features of networks (such as size and density) also affect social

integration, as do socio-demographic characteristics of network participants.   The availability of potential interactants in a social network is clearly a factor in social integration, and is related to the size of a person's network. Generally, research indicates that "among older adults, age is negatively related to network size" (Cornwell et al., 2008, p.185), indicating that older people's smaller social networks may put them at greater risk of reduced social integration. At the extremes, networks that are severely restricted in size are a likely cause of social isolation.

Social integration has also been considered in the context of diversity within networks. Older people's social networks tend to be closed and homogeneous (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001), yet social integration is facilitated by participation in social networks which are heterogeneous in nature (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2006; Wellman, 2007).   These issues will be considered in greater depth in the section on voluntary associations and social integration (see p.35).

In addition to features of networks themselves, social structural features also affect social integration in later life. Older people are not a homogeneous grouping within society, but occupy particular class, gender and other cultural positions[8].

Working class older people are at risk of reduced social integration and social marginalisation (Rosow, 1967; Giddens, 2006; Walker & Foster, 2006; Knipscheer, 2006; Quine et al., 2007). SES indicators such as level of education and occupational status are associated with stratification and inequality that in turn affect the "compilation of personal networks" (Ajrouch, Blandon & Antonucci, 2005, p.312), and hence possibilities for social integration. Network size and density are lower in lower SES networks (Gracia, Garcia & Musitu, 1995; Berkman & Glass, 2000; Ajrouch et al., 2005). In the context of friendship networks in particular, high SES is linked to "broader, deeper, and richer" networks (Marks & Ashleman, 2001, p.25; also Fischer, 1982, Moore, 1990; Phillipson, 2007).

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[8] A structural feature which impacts on social integration is ethnicity or cultural background. The social networks which were the subject of this study were largely lacking in diversity of this kind – despite the fact that 35% of older Australians were born overseas, and the majority of those are from non-English-speaking countries (AIHW, 2007b). Although this thesis does not address cultural background in any depth, this is not to deny that cultural background shapes the experience of later life, including participation in voluntary associations (Hazan, 1994), nor that it is relevant to social capital (Otto & Onyx, 2006). In fact, the social (and health) needs of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds "may be particularly acute as a result of cultural and language barriers; their geographical location and the circumstances of migration, which impact on their financial circumstances as well as psycho-social health" (Rao, Warburton & Bartlett, 2006, p.174; also Kokacinski, 2000). Furthermore, adjustment strategies differ with cultural background (Rokach, Orzeck & Neto, 2004).

Gender, too, intersects with age to create a complex picture for older people's social integration. Society is highly structured by gender divisions (Giddens, 2006), with men and women occupying different "gender worlds" (Tannen, 1990). The networks of older people in particular are strongly gender segregated (Walker-Birckhead, 1996; Karn, 1977), as older men and women tend to occupy "very traditional gender roles" (Arber, Andersson & Hoff, 2007, p.148).

In the early gerontological literature, social integration and marginalisation of older people was seen as problematic mainly for men since threats to social integration were associated with retirement from paid work (Russell, 2007b). In response to this over-identification of old age with older men, feminist gerontologists brought to light issues affecting older women, noting, for example, that being female and older involves twice the disadvantage - a "double jeopardy" (Gibson, 1996) or "double whammy" (Posner, 1977). Although the pattern may be reversed in old age (Arber & Evandrou, 1993b; Keating, Swindle & Foster, 2005), men tend to have larger social networks than women, are likely to be affiliated with larger associations than are women, and to be generally in "higher positions in hierarchical structures" than women whose ties are in "lower" hierarchical positions (Lin, 2000, p.788).

More recently, attention has been drawn once again to the risk older men face of social exclusion (Arber, Davidson, Daly & Perren, 2003; Arber, Davidson & Ginn, 2003; Davidson et al., 2003; Fennell & Davidson, 2003; Quine, Kendig, Russell & Touchard, 2004; Russell, 2007a). Older men generally have narrower social networks than women (Arber & Evandrou, 1993b; Keating, Swindle & Foster, 2005). Hearn (1995) concludes that "older men are, despite their social power as men, also subject to ageism, both structural and interpersonal" (p.113). Older men are becoming a 'subclass' (Hearn, 1995, p.101) who are "disadvantaged in relation to younger men" and of "lower status" (Calasanti, 2004, p.S313) and, hence, remain "relatively invisible in contemporary social life" (Thompson, 2006, p.633).

In subsequent sections I will consider some of the strategies employed by older people to maintain social integration and how environments, organisations, policies and attitudes facilitate or constrain these strategies.

Strategies for Adjustment

The previous section has considered some of the challenges posed by later life. I have noted that challenges are responded to by strategies to adjust. This section will consider

some of those strategies. The model of "selective optimisation with compensation" described in Baltes & Baltes (1990) is being used in this thesis to understand the process of social loss and adjustment. As resource availability decreases in later life, the older person determines what is important for them ('selection') and takes steps to improve their capacity to reach that goal ('optimisation'). If such steps are not possible, the person may 'compensate' in some way.

A person's capacity to adjust - and style of adjustment - depends on the resources available to them:

> People vary in the resources available to them in forging adaptive responses to life changes – whether at the psychological, interpersonal, community or societal level (Godfrey et al., 2004, p.4).

Factors which affect the availability of resources include gender, social class, health and cultural background. Such "background variables" serve as resources in the adaptation process (Stevens, 1995, p.40). A consequence of the operation of these structural factors is that a "substantial group of older people" are less able to exert influence over their physical and social environment (Phillipson, 2007, p.330), and hence less able to make adjustments. With regard to the role of social class, Biggs (1993) suggests that income is "perhaps the most potent determinant of resources" (p.88). Income affects the capacity to obtain resources necessary for participation. Inadequate resources, which may result from low SES, are a barrier to social integration, affecting sense of belonging to the community (ABS, 2004). Specifically, low income from retirement affects "the possibilities of older adults to be integrated in the ongoing activities of society" (de Jong Gierveld & Hagestad, 2006, p.631). Older people of higher SES tend to have larger social networks (Marks & Ashleman, 2001; Phillipson, 2007). Gender also mediates the experience of later life change and the means of adapting to it (Ginn & Arber, 1995; Russell, 2007a). Older men, for example, appear to be more "accepting of and express satisfaction with their situations in life", than women (Rubinstein, 1986, p.4; also Russell, Hill & Basser, 1996).

Adjustment in the Social Domain

The significance of social participation for older people is outlined by the World Health Organisation:

> Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community, as well as with the family, allows older people to continue to

exercise their competence, to enjoy respect and esteem, and to maintain
or establish supportive and caring relationships.   It fosters social
integration and is the key to staying informed (WHO, 2007, p.38)

Social participation is strongly connected with good health and well-being throughout the
lifecourse, including in older age (WHO, 2007, p.38). A positive association has been
found between social participation and health, including longevity (Unger, Johnson &
Marks, 1997; Bowling & Grundy, 1998; Tucker, Schwartz, Clark & Friedman, 1999;
Herzog, Ofstedal & Wheeler, 2002). Involvement by older people in social, leisure and
other activities has a positive effect on well-being and life satisfaction (Glass, Mendes de
Leon, Marottoli & Berkman, 1999; Silverstein & Parker, 2002; Warr, Butcher & Robertson,
2004; Baker, Cahalin, Gerst & Burr, 2005; Menec, 2003; George, 2006), and upon levels
of psychological distress (Ellaway & Macintyre, 2007). Conversely, a lack of social
participation, or social isolation, is negatively associated with health and wellbeing
(Rozanski, Blumenthal & Kaplan, 1999; Seeman, 2000).

Older people make active adjustments when changed circumstances impact on their social
world. Such adjustments may include changes to the composition of their social networks,
including informal networks of friends and family as well as formal networks such as those
of voluntary associations. Again, access to the necessary social resources for adjustment is
not equally distributed (Thoits, 1995; Pinquart & Sorensen, 2000; Avlund, Lund, Holstein,
Due, Sakari-Rantala & Heikkinen, 2004) since access is, in part, determined by "positions
in the hierarchical structure" (Lin, 1999, p.35).

The loss of a spouse - a "network-wide shock" (Riggs, 1997, p.182) - has far-reaching
effects on the older person's social world, and may lead to compensatory adjustments to
the person's remaining social networks (Connidis & Davies, 1990, p.S148). Similarly, the
loss of occupation through retirement has been found to increase a focus on "social
pursuits", particularly for men (Harlow & Cantor, 1996, p.1236).

It cannot be assumed, however, that lost relationships are simply substituted for by
establishment of new relationships; people establish relations "purposefully and continue
them when they continue to provide benefits" (Coleman, 1988, p.S105). Even when
opportunities are available for establishing new relationships, "most elders do not take
advantage of such opportunities" (Schnittker, 2007, p.662). 'Socioemotional selectivity
theory' (Carstensen, Fung & Charles, 2003) provides an explanation for this, suggesting

that some older people may avoid any "increased risk for negative interaction" which may accompany new relationships (Albert & Cattell, 1994, p.149), with the result that:

> the old may be more selective in choosing their social partners in an effort to regulate emotion and conserve physical energy. Perhaps also their lifelong accumulation of social experiences have taught them to be better judges of rewarding social relationships (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990, p.346).

Social support may be available in networks, and accessed to manage social loss. Such support involves the provision of instrumental, informational, or emotional assistance (Thoits, 1995), and may also "take the form of companionship or a sharing of confidences" (Fine & Thompson, 1995, p.73).

Social loss can affect social integration and this, too, is actively managed by older people, using strategies including peer grouping and by making psychological adjustments. A 'peer group' has been defined as a "set of individuals who, sharing certain common characteristics such as age, ethnicity, or occupation, perceive themselves and are recognized by others as a distinct social collectivity" (Scott & Marshall, 2005). Peer grouping is a general tendency in society (Lin, 2000), so that social relations are more common among people who share social similarities (Glanville, 2005; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). Underlying this is the principle of 'homophily' - "that contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people" (McPherson et al., 2001, p.416).

Social support and solidarity may be achieved by peer grouping since, in being socially similar, peers are likely to share an understanding of experiences, lifestyles, and attitudes (Aday et al., 2006). Socially dissimilar people – those outside the peer group such as young adults – can be a threat to an older person's "self-definition", requiring an effort "to ward off or disconfirm negative stereotypes" (Richeson & Shelton, 2006, p.193-194). Jerrome (1992), following Harris (1983), describes how this threat to social integration may be managed by peer group participation:

> Peer grouping is a mechanism whereby deprived people associate with others similarly deprived, hence reducing the sense of deprivation and exposure to people who might reinforce it (Jerrome, 1992, p.16).

By associating with similar others, then, ageism and other negative ascriptions based on age, may be "less relevant" and interactions within the group "more likely to affirm the self" (Richeson & Shelton, 2006 p.193-4).

Related to this are psychological strategies to manage threats to social integration, such as "distancing" the self from the category which is the source of the stigma:

> A degree of pretence, denial, dissociation, and disconnection would not only be an understandable reaction, but could even be regarded as a commendable form of resistance to the pressures and injustices of the prejudices against the old (Thompson et al., 1990, p.122)

Adjustments in the social domain underpin adjustments made in the domain of everyday life, and I will now turn to a consideration of this.

Maintaining Independence in Everyday Life

One of the main domains in which adjustment is made in later life is in the practical management of everyday life. The various threads of the following discussion will be drawn together within a framework of 'independence'. Independence is a major theme in ageing research (Arber & Evandrou, 1993b), and the concepts of dependence and independence "saturate" the gerontology literature (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2003). This is perhaps unsurprising, given its importance to older people themselves. Russell (1995b) reports on her study of older people's construction of 'dependency' that:

> without exception, all respondents emphasise - and usually spontaneously - the importance of 'independence' to them. When the inquiry is focused - "Why is independence so important to you?" the response is invariably a look of incredulity: Why would anyone ask such a question? Almost like the need to breathe, the need for independence is seen as self-evident (Russell, 1995b, p.89).

Another reason for gerontology's focus on independence is its potential contribution to informing policy and service provision that aims to meet the "physical, domestic and personal care needs of elderly and disabled people" (Arber & Evandrou, 1993a, p.23-24;

also Fine & Glendinning, 2005; Wilkin, 1987; Secker, Hill, Villeneau & Parkman, 2003)[9]. The conceptualisation of independence that underpins this discourse is the absence of "reliance on others in everyday activities" (Secker et al., 2003).   Narrowly viewing independence in this way, however, fails to take into account the broad range of senses in which 'independence' is used by older people themselves. This has prompted attempts to explore 'independence' from the older person's perspective (Sixsmith, 1986a; Russell, 1995b; Becker, 1994; Boggatz, Dijkstra, Lohrmann & Dassen, 2007; Ball, Perkins, Whittington, Hollingsworth, King & Combs, 2004; Plath, 2007; Grenier, 2006).   In the following discussion I will make use of a typology of independence provided by Sixsmith (1986a).

Sixsmith (1986a) described three senses in which 'independence' is used by people in talking about the meaning of home. The first sense, just mentioned, is "independence as self-reliance", the second is "independence as self-direction" and the third is "independence as freedom from obligation".   I will briefly consider each of these in relation to how older people make use of their social networks and other resources in order to achieve independence in the face of changing circumstances.

Independence as Self-reliance

Independence as *self-reliance*, or functional independence, is "being able to look after yourself, that is, not being dependent on other people" (Sixsmith, 1986a, p.340), or "avoiding reliance on others" (Secker et al., 2003, p.378). Being self-reliant in daily life requires the:

> effective management of the ordinary activities of daily life: doing the shopping and housework, keeping up contacts with relatives and friends, getting out and about, attending social functions, going to doctors' appointments, and [other] day-to-day transactions with people and events in their lives (Day, 1991, p.15).

The "effective management of the ordinary activities of daily life" can become more difficult with age-related physical changes and later life loss events. As well as finding new ways to manage everyday life that minimise reliance on others (Duner & Nordstrom,

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[9] 'Dependence' and 'independence' feature in, for example, the following Australian ageing policy documents: AIHW & Office for an Ageing Australia (2003); Prime Minister's Science Engineering and Innovation Council (2003).

2005; Lang & Baltes, 1997), older people may also use strategies to maintain their *capacity* to manage. Such capacity depends, in part, on "everyday competence", which is "a person's ability to perform, when necessary, a broad array of activities considered essential for independent living" (Diehl, 1998, p.422), the maintenance of which reinforces an older person's confidence in their ability to manage (Willcocks, Peace & Kellaher, 1987).

Aspects of everyday competence include physical, psychological (including cognitive) and social functioning (Torres & Hammarstrom, 2006). Cognitive competence can be enhanced by engaging in activities, including physical and social activities (Korn, 1999; Bassuk, Glass & Berkman, 1999; van Gelder, Tijhuis, Kalmijn, Giampaoli, Nissinen & Kromhout, 2004; Karp, Paillard-Borg, Wang, Silverstein, Winblad & Fratiglioni, 2006). Certain recreational activities such as bingo have been found to benefit cognitive performance and slow cognitive decline, including that of dementia sufferers (Kiraly, 2003; Woodward, 2005; Scarmeas & Stern, 2003; Sobel, 2001). Cognitive competence may even benefit from gambling activities (Desai, Maciejewski, Dausey, Caldarone & Potenza, 2004; Korn, 1999).

Independence as Self-direction

Independence can also be seen as "the capacity for self-direction", that is the "freedom" to make choices about what to do (Sixsmith, 1986a, p.341). This is particularly relevant in later life when opportunities for accessing places and activities may be reduced. This sense is closely related to 'autonomy' which has been defined as "self-government or self-determination" (Wray, 2004), and is the main sense identified by Russell (1995b) in the definitions of 'independence' offered by her elderly research participants (Russell, 1995b, p.89). A sense of the self as a worthwhile person is strongly influenced by seeing oneself as self-directing and autonomous (Coleman et al., 1998), yet this may be threatened in later life by the devaluation of older people, their activities, their organisations and their contributions to society (Nelson, 2002; Richeson & Shelton, 2006).

Older people employ strategies in everyday life to maximise this self-direction or autonomy, including seeking to maximise a sense of control and mastery over their environment. Independence, in this sense, involves experiencing the self as "competent and capable of taking care of everyday goals and activities" (Zirkel, 1992, p.507). An older person may seek, for example, to maintain mastery in the domestic sphere; the continued ability to manage the household "remains a core element of women's identity and conceptions of themselves as women in old age" (Pickard, 1995, p.226). Maintaining

autonomy and self-direction involves a number of strategies which are additional to strategies for maintaining self-reliance. These include exercising choice in what to do, in where to do it, and in when to do it.

Exercising choice and self-determination are valued by older people as a means of retaining a sense of personal control (Percival, 2002) and is central to the concept of independence (Arksey & Glendinning, 2007). One area in which control is sought is in the choice of people with whom relationships may be formed. For some older men, independence involves avoiding "the constraints and demands of others" (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2003, p.38):

> This was often expressed in regard to relationships where men felt that they would have limited ability to make decisions to suit themselves, of coming and going as they pleased, eating whatever and whenever they liked, choosing to drink or gamble (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2003, p.38).

Similarly, Russell, (2007b) reports that "men dislike being 'organised' and 'regimented' in their recreational pursuits, preferring to 'do their own thing', in their own time, and at their own pace" (p.182).

The ability to exercise choice in when and how to spend time is important as well. A predictable daily or weekly routine can provide "order, stability, and a sense of well-being" (Cheang, 2002, p.315). Being able to 'construct' a 'day' and maintaining a 'daily routine' is important for some older men (Rubinstein, 1986, p.145). One way in which time may be structured in later life is by drawing a sharp distinction between day and evening, with many older people choosing home-based activities in the evening (Rubinstein, 1986). Older people, particularly older women, often avoid going out at night because of concerns about personal safety, not wanting to drive at night and, for some, commitments associated with caregiving responsibilities (Blood et al., 1998; Fildes, Lee, Kenny & Foddy, 1994; ABS, 1996). For these reasons, different age groups can be seen to occupy different "temporal territories" (Ward, 1979a, p.24).

Independence as Freedom from Obligation

The final sense of independence to be considered here is that of "freedom from obligation" and avoidance of being "beholden" to others (Sixsmith, 1986a). This sense of independence differs from that of autonomy in being more symbolic in nature. In

interactions between older people and their friends and family, older people generally balance giving and receiving in order to remain free from unwanted obligation. Relationships with friends, for example, may include actions such as the mutual provision of assistance and emotional support, sharing, looking after the interests of the other, and providing assistance with caring responsibilities (Crohan & Antonucci, 1989; Williams & Roberts, 1995; Lawrence & Schigelone, 2002). Obligation with family may be avoided, for example, by maintaining an independent home from adult children, while maintaining a close and supportive relationship - "intimacy at a distance" (Rosenmayr & Kockeis, 1963).

Older people may perceive themselves to be "dependent" in situations where they are "receiving without giving" (Pickard, 1995, p.155). A loss of capacity - because of functional loss or financial limitations - can result in "asymmetric exchanges in which [older people] are unable to discharge obligations incurred" (Albert & Cattell, 1994, p.142), and the resulting asymmetry may be "uncomfortable" (Rook, 1987).

In order to avoid this state of obligation and indebtedness to others, older people attempt to maintain *equality* in relationships. As Blau (1964) has proposed for people in general:

> Individuals and groups are interested in at least maintaining a balance between inputs and outputs and staying out of debt in their social transactions; hence the strain towards reciprocity (Blau, 1964, p.26)

One strategy for maintaining this type of independence when threatened by potential unbalanced exchange is to draw in additional resources to redress imbalance, particularly in relationships with adult children (Sherman, 2000; Victor, 2005). When a lack of personal or social resources makes it impossible to avoid obligation by maintaining equality of exchange, strategies may be employed to adjust by, for example, changing social preferences and social network composition (Carstensen et al., 2003; Löckenhoff & Carstensen, 2004).

Independence of this third type incorporates the notion that some activities can be 'symbolic of independence' (Sixsmith, 1986a). Independence of this sort is "allied to the idea of identity and the preservation of personal integrity" (Sixsmith, 1986a, p.343). The home, for example, can "symbolically represent the independent self" (Sixsmith, 1986a, p.343). Similarly, being able to stay living in one's own home despite difficulties with managing, can symbolise independence (Fine, 1992). It may be that other actions and places, in addition to home, can also symbolise independence. Seale (1996), for example,

noted that maintaining activities in the face of increasing physical disability can signify "independence".

Strategies that Make Use of Place

In the first part of this section, I discussed some ways in which aspects of older people's relationship with their environment can be negatively affected by later life change. Older people generally use strategies to maintain their connection with those aspects of their spatial environment which are important to them, and which facilitate other important areas of their lives.

Increasing spatial constriction can occur with increasing functional disability, with the effect that the home may become more important (Kelly, 1990)[10]. It has been argued that 'home' cannot be understood without reference to its alternatives (Willcocks et al., 1987). Similarly, the meaning of living alone "relates partly to the matrix of outside activities and one's subjective attachments to them" (Rubinstein, 1986, p.217), and this is presumably equally true of "home" as it is of "living alone". b Managing increased home-centeredness involves negotiating a wider spatial context. Constriction to home is best managed when there are some alternatives to home. Willcocks et al. (1987) argue that "the relationship between home and home-range or neighbourhood is symbiotic in the sense that each supports and gives meaning to the other" (pps.4-5). Having places in the local area to go *to*, then, is likely to be important in later life, and this is reflected in the expressed need of some older people to "get out of the house" – a motivation for activity which is independent of the motivation to engage in the activities themselves (Rubinstein, 1986). "Getting out of the house" has been found to be a motivation for attending gambling venues (Hagen, Nixon & Solowoniuk, 2005; LCSA, 1998), and for playing bingo (Fallon, 1999).

I have considered the circumstances of older people in terms of the later life changes that affect them, and some of the strategies they use to adjust to them. One common

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[10] The significance of home to everyday life, in particular, is described by Sixsmith & Sixsmith (1991): "the home is the base from which the individual operates in everyday life: the place from which the person has to go and to which he must eventually return" (p.180). As Secker et al. (2003) point out, "the importance to many of remaining in their own home or returning there as soon as possible cannot be over-emphasised" (p.286; also Andrews et al., 2007). Home is where older people want to be, and where they want to continue to be, even as it becomes increasingly difficult: "all the available evidence, including more extensive surveys (see e.g. Rowland, 1991; Fine, 1992; Gibson, 1998), show that the vast majority of older people are 'satisfied' with their homes and strongly committed to staying at home, even in the face of substantial environmental and other practical difficulties" (Russell, 1999, p.2).

denominator is the older person's participation in social networks. It is their social networks which are affected by loss, it is their social networks which moderate their capacity to manage change, and it is their social networks which are accessed in their efforts to manage change. Social involvement underpins adjustment, since it provides access to instrumental support and networks to maintain social participation and integration. In the next section, I will examine the role of social networks in later life, focusing particularly on the networks in voluntary associations, and in registered clubs in particular.

Section II: The Role of Social Network Interaction in Later Life

Social networks in later life are impacted by changing circumstances and, at the same time, are the basis for generating a response to change. This section considers in greater depth the relationships which comprise later life social networks and considers their functional role in a range of domains in an older person's life. Social participation may be described as informal or formal, where the former is based on individualised relationships while the latter is mediated by an organised structure, such as a voluntary association.

Informal Social Interaction

Informal social participation takes place within individualised relationships (Oldenburg, 1999). Such relationships include those of a horizontal nature with individuals such as family members, friends, acquaintances and other interactants in 'generalised relationships' (Stone & Hughes, 2002), as well as those which are vertical [11] with organisations, such as workplaces and voluntary associations. This section considers, firstly, relationships between family and friends, secondly, looser connections that occur between acquaintances and strangers, and thirdly, individualised connections between people and organisations.

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[11] This use of horizontal and vertical marks a distinction between relationships with individuals and relationships with organisations, and does not make any assumptions about the content of those relationships. As such, it is distinct from Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti (1993) use of horizontal and vertical, which is concerned with relationships which are asymmetrical in power: "Any society – modern or traditional, authoritarian or democratic, feudal or capitalist – is characterized by networks of interpersonal communication and exchange, both formal and informal. Some of these networks are primarily "horizontal", bringing together agents of equivalent status and power. Others are primarily "vertical", linking unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence" (Putnam et al., 1993, p.173)

Family and Friends

Networks of family and friends have been extensively studied by gerontologists and widely acknowledged to fundamentally shape the experience of ageing (Victor, 2005). Shanas (1979) has been credited with proposing "the primacy of the family for older people as the focus of their social world and as the primary and favoured source of support, both emotional and instrumental" (Victor, 2005, p.189). Since then, many studies have reported that relationships with family are central to older people's wellbeing and support (Antonucci, Lansford, Akiyama, Smith, Baltes, Takahashi, Fuhrer & Dartigues, 2002; Bishop, Martin & Poon, 2006; Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006). Older people need access to family - whether for the purpose of simply enjoying social interaction together or for support – yet access can be limited in older age for a variety of reasons including the unavailability of family members because of work commitments, mobility difficulties making contact difficult and so on.

Older people's friendships have been "largely marginalised" (Victor, 2005, p.212) by research that has tended to focus on older people's relationships with family, particularly on family support. Friendship is a very important relationship in later life: "there are certain periods of life when friends are particularly important, and old age is one of them" (Furman, 1997, p.28). Friendships are valued by older people, often for particular purpose, such as companionship, emotional support, guidance and comfort (Crohan & Antonucci, 1989), and have been found to be more important than family relationships in providing social (and emotional) support (Cantor, 1991; Aday et al., 2006). In addition, friendship provides self-worth (Coleman et al., 1998) and may alleviate loneliness (Riggs, 1997; Steed, Boldy, Grenade & Iredell, 2007).

Casual Contact

Older people interact with people other than family and friends, although this aspect of older people's relationships is often overlooked (Stone, 2003a)[12]. An older person's informal social network is comprised not only of family and friends, but is likely also to include other people with whom the person has a more or less casual relationship. These casual relationships may include relationships with neighbours, acquaintances, strangers or

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[12] One possible reason for the neglect of casual relationships has been proposed by Oldenburg (1999) who suggests that such interaction is not considered "real" interaction (Oldenburg, 1999) as it takes place in public, or semi-public, places. The fact that such interactions take place in such locations does not, in fact, "diminish their moral value or meaning" (Faircloth, 2002, p.574-575).

fellow members or participants in clubs and organisations (ABS, 2004); as well as with staff members of organisations or associations with which the older person interacts. While ties with friends and family are often close, other ties are looser, while still others - such as that with a 'nodding acquaintance' - may even be 'negligible', effectively 'absent', ties (Granovetter, 1973).

Looser casual, even 'negligible' ties can be distinguished from "individualized forms of friendship" (Oldenburg, 1999, p.63), and Amin & Thrift (2002) make a distinction between this type of group interaction and individualised relationships in describing an alternative to traditional forms of community they call 'light sociality'; that is "groups that come together briefly around a particular purpose and then disperse again" (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p.45).

The role of casual interaction in the lives of older people is alluded to in an Australian Government discussion paper which states that:

> Casual contact between neighbours, attending local groups, and talking to
> people while out in the community are all ways in which people maintain
> a sense of purpose, identity and connectedness which are important for
> health and wellbeing (Bishop, 2000, p.39)

Some researchers have addressed the possible significance of casual ties, and casual "encounters" (Misztal, 2005). The potential for casual relationships to develop into more substantial ones was noted by Martin (1970). Casual ties, and even 'negligible' ones, may have significance in their own right, however, and not simply because of their potential to lead to the development of stronger ties. It is mistaken to assume that casual encounters occurring in public places serve no significant purpose in their own right. Holstein & Gubrium (2003) have noted that:

> Significant things go on in surprisingly public circumstances. The public
> and the private often blend, making street scenes as intimate and
> important as households and workplaces (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003,
> p.12).

Furthermore, "casual but meaningful" relations among co-workers, neighbours and other acquaintances may fall into a "gaping conceptual chasm" left by categorising - as public or private - places where such relationships flourish (Cahill, 2000, p.392).

Organisations

In addition to (horizontal) informal relationships with friends, family, acquaintances and strangers, older people may have informal connections of a vertical nature with organisations or groups. By focusing on horizontal connections as a source of, for example, social support, "we have overlooked the possibility that instead of specific people, whole groups might function as sources of perceived support" (Thoits, 1995, p.67). Despite being counter-intuitive, there is precedent for treating organisations in this way:

> Most proximate among [social network ties] are friendships and affiliations with community organizations, particularly those in which there is face-to-face interaction and a process of identification has taken place (Booth, Edwards & Johnson, 1991, p.209)

Similarly, organisations or groups count as elements in the composition of a social network (ABS, 2004, p.14), and Stone & Hughes (2002) count "institutions" among network members[13].

The nature of this person-organisation relationship is exemplified in the following description of "social attachment" (that is, the nature and strength of relationships), which is seen as applying equally to people and organisations:

> [Social attachment] includes the more intimate relationships with family and friends as well as people's associations with individuals and organisations in the wider community. … more generally, it refers to the way in which people bond, interact with, and feel about other people, organisations and institutions (such as clubs, business organisations, political parties and various government organisations) (ABS, 2004, p.6).

This type of relationship has been considered in the context of attachment to home (Rowles & Chaudhury, 2005), as well as in attachment to voluntary associations and similar groupings (Jerrome, 1992; Furman, 1997). Perhaps of most relevance is the concept of "place attachment" (Altman & Low, 1992) which draws attention to the contribution of both the physical and social environments in the development of strong ties to place. Place attachment has been defined as "a multilevel person-place bond that evolves from

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[13] Albeit in an "institutional realm" as opposed to "informal" or "generalised" realms where horizontal relationships are located (Stone & Hughes, 2002, p.3)

specifiable conditions of place and characteristics of people" (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983, p. 223).

In the context of later life adjustment, connections with organisations have been found to play a facilitating role (MacLean, Brown & Sijpkes, 1983; Furman, 1997; Cheang, 2002). This role may contribute to an older person's sense that the organisation, group or place is of personal significance to them, and result in their valuing it positively (Curtis & Rees Jones, 1998), creating a sense of belonging (Altman & Low, 1992). Furthermore, such relationships may contribute to a sense of personal or collective identity (Rivlin, 1987).

Formal Social Interaction: Voluntary Association Participation

A distinction was made earlier between participation in informal and formal social networks; the informal being with friends, family and casual acquaintances, as well as individualised relations with organisations.   This section discusses formal social interaction: participation in formal networks which includes associational participation – that is, participation in social networks based on shared membership of an association, rather than being based, in the first instance, on existing interpersonal ties. A particular context for an older person's social networks, therefore, is the voluntary association.

Voluntary Associations and their Older Membership

A voluntary association is "any public, formally constituted, and non-commercial organization of which membership is optional, within a particular society" (Marshall, 1998).   Associational participation is therefore distinguishable from other types of association in which 'association' is not voluntary, but is ascribed, such as in the workplace. Other descriptions of voluntary associations draw attention to their collective nature; they are "designed to allow individuals an opportunity to pursue their shared interests collectively" (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega & Weitz, 2004), and offer "the chance to come together with others to create or participate for collective benefit" (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986, p.3). This points to their 'common purpose' - the "shared intention or motivation, an intended or desired result, end or aim for which a group or community come together" (ABS, 2004, p.42). Other characteristics of voluntary associations include that they have a specific name, a governing body, "articulated goals or purposes", and a membership. Although they may have some paid staff, they are largely run by volunteers (Harris, 1998).

Voluntary associations cover a wide spectrum of types of organisation, including leisure groupings (such as social and sports clubs), professional and community service organisations, age-graded associations (such as clubs for youth or older people) and religious groups (Harris, 1998; Marshall, 1998; Perren et al., 2003). There is also a wide range of associations of different sizes and degrees of formal organisation, with some larger ones having "national headquarters, elected officers, formal titles, charters, membership dues, regular meeting times, and national conventions" (Brinkerhoff et al., 2004, p.113).

Participation in voluntary associations tends to involve participation in networks which are homogeneous in age, class, gender and cultural background (Glanville, 2005). This is the case even in those associations which have memberships that cut across social groupings, since members tend to form a peer group within a wider heterogeneous setting (Harris, 1983; McPherson et al., 2001).

Voluntary associations tend to have memberships which are age-homogeneous, and this is true for young, middle-aged and older age groups. For older people in particular, Dempsey (1990a) found that "the elderly were absent or virtually absent from any organization in which people under the age of 40 comprise the majority of members" (p.39). Age-homogeneity is not surprising in voluntary associations for which older age is a membership requirement, such as senior citizens' clubs, frail aged day care centres, the University of the Third Age (U3A). Of greater interest are those voluntary associations in which there are no formal barriers to mixed-age participation but which are age-graded nonetheless. For example, some church fellowships may consist largely of older people (Ward, 1979b; Jerrome, 1992), while older people are largely missing from particular voluntary associations, as was the case for the Rotary Club in Smalltown (Dempsey, 1990b). Leaders in older people's voluntary associations tend to be younger than the general membership (Harris, 1983). Furthermore, old age organisations are found near the bottom of a status hierarchy in a social stratification system (Russell, 1981; Dempsey, 1990b).

Class-homogeneity is the norm for voluntary association networks (Glanville, 2005). For older people, the class-homogeneous associations to which they belong tend to be working class (Thewis, 2001) – middle class people "tend to avoid age specific associations – unless of course they run them" (Harris, 1983, p.23). As Harris is suggesting, the exception to this class homogeneity is that those in leadership positions within a voluntary

association are "overwhelmingly" of higher SES than the general membership (Bryson & Thompson, 1972; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). Different social classes belong to different types of voluntary organisations (Wild, 1974; Ward, 1979b). The working class nature of many older people's groups is a factor in their low social status (Russell, 1981).

After age, gender is one of the "most frequently studied types of network homogeneity" (Adams, 1994, p.166).   Voluntary associations tend to be highly sex-segregated (McPherson et al., 2001), as is the case for voluntary associations for older people in particular, which are attended largely by older women (Karn, 1977; Russell, 1981; Williamson, 2000). Even within age-mixed associations for older people, genders often maintain a separation. Men and women "rarely even converse" with members of the other gender (Pickard, 1995, p.254). Once again, the exception to this pattern is that boards of management of voluntary associations tend to be disproportionately male, regardless of the gender of the majority of members (Acker, 1990; Moore & Allen Whitt, 2000; Lowndes, 2004).

There are also gender differences in the types of organisations joined by men and women (Lowndes, 2004; Osborne et al., 2008). Women join "smaller, less formal, and more expressive" associations (Brinkerhoff et al., 2004, p.114), and those involved in health, youth, education or social services (Caiazza, 2005; Lowndes, 2004). It is not clear how this translates into the later life context, however, as these patterns are partly related to the parenting role of younger women. Men are more likely to participate in sport and recreation voluntary associations (Lowndes, 2004). Men's groups tend to be higher status than women's; in both mixed-age and old-age voluntary associations, women's groups are lower in status than men's groups (Davidson et al., 2003, p.81).

In summary, voluntary associations to which older people belong, tend to be age homogeneous, working class and comprised mainly of women, while being run by people who are more likely to be younger, male and of higher social class. Furthermore, old age organisations are located near the bottom of the social hierarchy. It is not surprising, then, that older people tend to reject participation in exclusively older people's organisations (Russell, 1981; Thompson et al., 1990; Perren et al., 2003; Cheang, 2002).

The Functional Role of Associational Participation

One reason for an interest in associational participation is that it is thought to be beneficial for members (Brinkerhoff et al., 2004). Associational participation has been found to be

beneficial for mental and physical health, wellbeing, personal happiness, life satisfaction and for reducing social isolation (Young & Glasgow, 1998; Rietschlin, 1998; Helliwell, 2001; Arber et al., 2002; Veenstra, Luginaah, Wakefield, Birch, Eyles & Elliott, 2005).

Early research into voluntary associations focussed on their role in adaptation to change:

> Voluntary or common-interest associations have been studied as adaptive mechanisms in situations of social, cultural, ecological, and technological change, especially in change involving rapid urban growth and large-scale migrations of rural populations to towns and cities (Kerri, 1976, p.23)

Belonging to a voluntary association was thought to aid adaptation by providing a basis for "mutual aid, political influence, and the perpetuation of a cultural identity" (Winthrop, 1991, p. 21). Related to this view, but in the context of the 'breakdown' of the extended family in urban industrialised society, voluntary associations were seen as providing "an alternative to the social and emotional support no longer provided by the family" (Hammond, 1971, p.193). Echoes of this can be heard today in the proposition that associational participation may substitute for a lack of family contact (Amin & Thrift, 2002), including in later life (Adams & Allan, 1998). This function has, however, been contested (Karn, 1977; Keith, 1980; Hann, 2000).

Voluntary associations can be a source of social support, particularly in later life (Veenstra et al., 2005; Bekkers, Völker, Van der Gaag & Flap, 2008). Belonging to a voluntary association facilitates the development of new interpersonal relationships (Cornwell et al., 2008), which is a process specifically facilitated by the fact that participation is *associational:*

> Associational activity has the effect of extending the number of relationships available to an individual within which personal selection may be made. Associational relationships are not chosen, as friendship relations are, but neither are they given. The set is chosen by virtue of a person's choice of an association within which to participate.   The members of this set are a given (Harris, 1983, p.17).

A voluntary association may also serve an instrumental function for its members, which can be distinguished from its expressive function (Gordon & Babchuk, 1959; Bekkers et al.,

2008). Needs for intimacy and association can be met while enabling "greater control over our immediate environment" (Brinkerhoff et al., 2004, p.114):

> Membership in groups can not only be socio-emotionally gratifying but make it possible for the individual to control an important part of his environment (Babchuk & Booth, 1969, p.31-32)

The same voluntary association may be used either instrumentally or socially by different members (Hazan, 1980; Russell, 1981; Cutler & Hendricks, 2000).

Voluntary Associations and Social Integration

As we have seen, the notion that voluntary associations "integrate individuals within society and promote intergroup contact" has a long history (Glanville, 2005, p.465). How, then, might voluntary associations bring about the social integration of their members? Previously I considered the meaning of social integration (p.14) but did not pursue any further the question whether social integration is achieved by within-group strong cohesive ties, or by connections into the wider society. The literature on this suggests two competing mechanisms. Broadly, one conceptualisation of the role of voluntary associations in the social integration of their members sees that role as creating strong links within the voluntary association's (generally homogeneous) networks, as opposed to links outside. Voluntary associations, in this view, foster "the development of ties to similar others rather than ties that bridge social cleavages" (Glanville, 2005, p.466). The other conceptualisation contends that voluntary associations function by hosting a type of participation which fosters links to the wider community (via heterogeneous networks). In this view, voluntary associations provide "opportunities for reducing cleavages that create conflict, inequality, and distrust" (Glanville, 2005, p.466). This difference is crucial for understanding the role of voluntary associations and the outcomes of social capital inherent in those associations, as I explain later. With regard to the first of these meanings, participation in strong bonded networks is likely to be beneficial for members, but the value of treating this as *social integration* is questionable, since such networks have the potential to marginalise members by constraining social interaction within homogeneous network, and to prevent external linkages:

> Voluntary associations are overwhelmingly homogeneous, promoting relations between similar people but inhibiting contact between dissimilar ones… Since the relations that people form can be only as

heterogeneous as the structures within which they meet other people, voluntary group homogeneity acts as a barrier to societal integration (Popielarz, McPherson & Miller, 1995, p.699).

Associational participation is perhaps best conceptualised, then, not as a source of social integration, but rather as a source of cohesion.

Role in Group Cohesion

Networks with the quality of group cohesion have strong connections between members who experience a sense of unity and identity as a group, as well as a sense that they belong together. Cohesiveness is related to 'solidarity' - "strong feelings of fraternity, together with the values of mutual aid and participation" (Scott & Marshall, 2005). Cohesiveness is also related to the notion of 'community'[14] in that it "concerns a particularly constituted set of social relationships based on something which the participants have in common - usually a common sense of identity" (Scott & Marshall, 2005).

The creation of such cohesiveness in groups of older people has been considered by sociocultural anthropologists in the context of 'community formation' (Faircloth, 2002; Fry, 1979; Furman, 1997; Jerrome, 1992; Keith, 1980; McAllister & Silverman, 1999; Shield, 1997). In an ethnographic study of a residential community for older people, Keith (1980) identified factors which contributed to the development of 'community' – where community is akin to the cohesiveness under consideration here. 'Community' was seen as having three dimensions: the first is that it is bounded geographically, the second is that it has an affective dimension of "we-feeling" and the third is a structural dimension of "patterned social interaction" (Keith, 1980, p.172; also Keith, 1979). These factors point to mechanisms which may operate within voluntary associations to create group cohesion. I will discuss each factor in turn.

The role of context, and spatial context in particular, is highlighted by the condition for community creation that networks be 'geographically bounded' (Keith, 1980)[15]. This highlights once again the role of place. Associational participation, in most instances,

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[14] Scott & Marshall (2005) cautions that "the sociological content of community, has … remained a matter for endless dispute" (Scott & Marshall, 2005) and for this reason, I am using "community" here in a general way.

[15] The requirement of 'propinquity' (interactants being co-located) for community formation (Weber, 1947) has been questioned, as the possibility of "community without propinquity" (Webber, 1963) has gained acceptance (Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Gilleard & Higgs, 2005).

takes place in a particular location and involves face-to-face interaction. Such interaction creates the opportunity for other community-creating processes to occur, including the development of a "repertory of shared experiences which is a basis for feelings of distinctiveness as a community" (Keith, 1980, p.180). Participation in regular interaction is a necessary step which must be taken before "all the other steps in community building [can] take place" (Kloby, 2004). As Hagestad & Uhlenberg (2005) suggest, "spatial proximity is foundational for the possibility of face-to-face interaction to occur and bonds to be built" (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005, p.351).

Another element of community is 'we-feeling'. Defined as "a sense of distinctiveness and of shared fate" (Keith, 1979, p.2; Keith, 1980), we-feeling reflects group members' identification with other members of the group (Fry, 1979). We-feeling captures the idea that the group experiences a sense that they 'belong together' (Martin, 1970) and experience "us-ness" (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986), and relates also to the "shared emotional connection" which is a building block of "sense of community" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Certain factors permit the development of we-feeling:

> Conditions which promote we-feelings … can be divided into those which are present or not among a collection of individuals at the beginning of the process – background factors; and those which may or may not develop over time – emergent factors." (Keith, 1980, p.176)

'Background factors' include characteristics of individuals and of their networks, such as age and cultural background, as well as network size and homogeneity. It is the things which the participants have in common - "structural commonalities" - that assist community formation (Furman, 1997, p.22). Structural commonalities include age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status (Furman, 1997). Other researchers have also noted the role of social and cultural homogeneity of network participants in promoting the formation of group solidarity (Jerrome, 1992; Albert & Cattell, 1994; Shield, 1997).

A third dimension of community is social organisation (Fry, 1979) or patterned social interaction (Keith, 1980), which has both cognitive and behavioural aspects. Of the cognitive, group members' shared expectations, norms and beliefs, which arise from structural commonalities within the membership and from ongoing interaction, help to create cohesive connections (Keith, 1980). The behavioural aspect of social organisation includes transactions occurring within the network. One such transaction is reciprocity

(Fry, 1979) which functions as "a way of binding individuals to the group" (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986, p.101), and of creating solidarity (Heringa, 2006, p.70).

Processes of community formation lead to the development of solidarity within a group or voluntary association. These processes will be revisited and built upon in Part III of this chapter, where mechanisms of social capital creation are discussed.

Just as peer grouping assists an older person to manage age stigma, so may voluntary association participation. This connection is made explicit by Jerrome (1992) who says that "the patterns observed with the primary group extends to more formal expressions of peer group interests such as voluntary organisations" (Jerrome, 1992 p.15).

Given the various functions of associational participation in the later life context, it may be expected that, as the population continues to age, voluntary associations may become increasingly significant. Cutler & Hendricks (2000) says that "forecast after forecast … has suggested that voluntary participation will increase in importance among older persons as resources shrink and retirement lengthens" (p.S98). In light of this, unequal access to associational participation may be detrimental to those older people who cannot participate.

Unequal Access to Voluntary Association Participation

Voluntary associations are not equally accessed by all social strata, suggesting that any advantages or disadvantages of associational participation are not equally available. Participation in most types of voluntary association generally decreases with increasing age (Dempsey, 1990c; Bennett et al., 1999; Baum et al., 2000b; ABS, 2007) as well as with decreasing functional status (Nyqvist, Gutavsson & Gustafson, 2006). Socioeconomic differences in rates of voluntary participation have also been found, with lower SES groups participating less than higher SES groups (Arber et al., 2002; Caiazza, 2005; Warr, 2006; ABS, 2007; Osborne et al., 2008). The effect of gender on associational participation is less clear (Cutler & Hendricks, 2000). Some studies have suggested that men are more likely to belong to voluntary associations than women (Putnam et al., 1993 ; Bennett et al., 1999), although when education and some other variables are controlled for, affiliation rates seem to be similar for both men and women (Popielarz, 1999; Arber et al., 2002).

Certain types of voluntary association go against these trends of decreasing involvement with age and class. In the United Kingdom, "social clubs", such as workingmen's clubs and bingo venues are participated in at higher rates by disadvantaged older people than by other groups (Arber et al., 2002, p.90), leading to the conclusion that "social clubs are

therefore the province of working-class older people" (Arber et al., 2002, p.92). In Australia, a similar pattern has been observed in social club participation: "social club attendance was more frequently reported by men, people over 60, and those with low levels of education" (Baum et al., 2000b, p.419).

This section has considered older people's associational participation, along with informal relationships with family as one type of social participation. The next section considers in more detail the Australian social club participation just noted, which is a source of social participation for older (generally working class) people – the registered or licensed club.

Club Participation

A particular type of voluntary association in which a large number of older people participate in Australia is the *registered club*, such as the Langley Ex-Services and Community Club, the site for this research. It has been estimated that there are 5,600 registered or licensed clubs in Australia (CCCANZ, 1999)[16]. Sixty percent of clubs are located in rural and regional areas (ABS, 2006), and this in the context of the fact that about 22 per cent of the NSW population lives outside a metropolitan area (IPART, 2007, p.7). In many communities, particularly in NSW, and including those in rural areas, there is at least one club (ClubsNSW, 2004). In their local area, clubs strengthen social cohesion because of their pivotal role as a focal point for local communities (PC, 1999; ACT Government, 2000)[17]. Clubs support organised groupings of older people in their local communities and thereby facilitate access by individual older people to the social participation and other benefits which occur in those groupings (Stoneham, 1999)[18].

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[16] It is difficult to get statistics on all licensed clubs in all Australian states. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has published data on only a subset of clubs – those clubs which were "significant employing and non-employing organisations in Australia that generated income predominantly from the provision of hospitality services (drinking facilities, gambling, meals and other hospitality services) to members. As such, clubs whose main activity was the provision of sporting services were not included within the scope of this industry" (ABS, 2006, p.15).

[17] An indicator of this local community focus is in the way clubs describe themselves: The website of ClubsVic includes a banner with the phrase "the heart of the community", and the ClubsSA website uses "community way of life". The connection to the local community is also reflected in the fact that many clubs are named by using a convention in which "Community Club" is preceded by the name of the local suburb or town. For example, "North Ryde RSL Community Club", "Southport Workers Community Club", "Marion Sports and Community Club" and "Springwood & District Community Club".

[18] The role of clubs in the local community is particularly well documented in local histories of regions, of the establishing bodies of clubs, and of particular clubs themselves. Examples of the latter include histories of the Revesby Workers Club, Surfers Paradise RSL Memorial Club, Mildura Working Man's Club (Peters,

Club participation is an exception to the usual pattern of associational participation which reduces with increasing age (DASETT, 1991; Lynch & Veal, 1996; VCGR, 2005; Bennett et al., 1999); Baum et al., 2000b; ABS, 2007)[19]. Furthermore, club participation is higher in lower SES groups than in higher ones, which is a reversal of the usual pattern for associational participation (Baum et al., 2000b; Bennett et al., 1999). In addition, the usual class differences between ordinary members and management is also absent in clubs (Bryson & Thompson, 1972; Bennett et al., 1999; Baum et al., 2000b). Furthermore, clubs have high rates of participation by older people, which bucks the trend in reduced associational participation with increasing age. Club participation is unusual with regard to participation by older men in associations in that older men participate at rates higher than women. Finally, clubs buck an historical trend towards lower levels of associational participation (Putnam et al., 1993; Keen, 1999), by recording a continuing increase in memberships (IPART, 2007).

The Club as a Voluntary Association

I will now describe registered clubs in more detail while, at the same time, drawing attention to their voluntary association nature. Registered clubs[20] are licensed social clubs which have been described as "groups of people sharing a common interest who combine to provide facilities to promote and pursue that interest" (RCA NSW, 2004; IPART, 2007). This definition emphasises such associational features such as 'common purpose', which are also in evidence in the types of groupings which establish clubs. Such groupings are

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1985, McRobbie, 1995, Voullaire, 1995 respectively). Smith (1992) is a study of both the Yarraville Citizen's Club and the local area, and the title of Hardy-Rix's (1995) history, Watsonia RSL Sub-Branch - A History - The Tin Shed and Beyond,- attests to the club's contribution to the community "beyond" it. Histories of RSL sub-branches which established clubs, such as Stickley (1945), Fearnside (1972) and Short (1978) also cover the connection between the club and the community, as does a history of both an RSL sub-branch and its club (Yeronga Services Club & Pullar, 1999). This broader social role of clubs in the local community is exemplified in an historical account of the Watsonia RSL Club in Victoria (Hardy-Rix, 1995). When it was first established, the club was the only meeting place in the suburb. The club became the kindergarten, and even the church. The CCCANZ (2001) reports that the "Lightning Ridge District Bowling Club is an example of a club that supports most of the voluntary and community organisations in its local area in some form or another. Over 70 groups use the meeting facilities and premises of the club, from State Government departments to "the local lady conducting piano lessons" (CCCANZ, 2001).

[19] Clubs may even be more popular with older people than senior citizens centres. The Council on the Ageing (NSW) estimated that there are approximately 800 Senior Citizens Centres in the state of NSW (pers. com, 2004), which compares with, in the same state, approximately 1,400 clubs operating in over 1,500 club premises (IPART, 2007).

[20] In NSW, under the Clubs Act 1976 No 31, a "club means a club that holds a club licence" which is granted by the state government under the Liquor Act 2007.

generally pre-existing voluntary associations, such as a Sub-Branch of the ex-service organisation, the Returned and Services Leagues (RSL), or a local sporting club[21]. In this way, the club is formed with a common purpose. The establishing body, having decided to form a registered club, takes the necessary steps to obtain a licence from the government[22]. Clubs are composed of members, from amongst whom a voluntary board of management is elected. Members go through a process of joining, which involves the payment of a nominal membership fee. Members may or may not take an interest in the running of the club.

The associational nature of clubs is also apparent in the way that members, guests of members, and visitors can 'associate' with one another by attending the club whenever it is open, and by participating in a range of activities. For smaller clubs, such activities may simply be participating in the sport for which the club was established, such as lawn bowls or golf. Larger clubs generally provide restaurant and bar services, poker machines and entertainment, while some also provide holiday accommodation (PC, 1999). Associational participation can take place within such large clubs, as members can participate in the activities of 'sub-clubs' - interest-based associations under the umbrella of the main club.

A final associational aspect of clubs is their financial arrangements; clubs are prohibited by law from making a profit (Lynch & Veal, 2006), because of a principle of "mutuality" in the regulatory framework governing clubs (PC, 1999). This means that the substantial revenue obtained from poker machines, and other sources, must be channelled back into the club "for the benefit of members, to improve club facilities and to subsidise meals and entertainment" (AIGR, 1999, p.166).

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[21] Many clubs are still controlled by their establishing body, while others have become more or less distinct entities: "Notwithstanding the fact that the licensed club may have purchased the property from the sub-branch, in some cases many years ago, the sub-branch, generally retains defacto control of the club through restricting board appointments to Sub-branch members of the club and reserving the exclusive right for Sub-branch members to vote on constitutional change. Hence, by default, they still effectively control the operation of the club" (RSL & Services Clubs Association Limited, 2007, p.33)

[22] Clubs are licensed by state governments and must comply with a range of regulatory requirements. This compliance is monitored, and the adequacy of the regulatory requirements are reviewed from time to time. Furthermore, national and state governments want to minimise harm from club use (such as from problem gambling and excessive alcohol consumption), and want also to ensure that adequacy of club taxation arrangements – an important source of government revenue. These sorts of concerns have given rise to a number of enquiries, national and state, which are a source of useful information about clubs (Moffitt, 1974; Wilcox, 1983; Street, 1991; PC, 1999; IPART, 2007).

There are ways, however, in which clubs differ from the voluntary association model. Membership of a club is easy to obtain, with few restrictions, and the membership fee is usually so low as to be tokenistic (Oxley, 1978; Dickerson, 1996; PC, 1999). Clubs admit non-members as visitors and, in so doing, they are effectively providing services to the general public; interactions with other club-goers, then, is not restricted to fellow members. Another way in which clubs diverge from a voluntary associational model is in the use of paid staff who work alongside the voluntary management. Finally, the large social clubs which often have memberships in the tens of thousands (Hing, 2000), "have the appearance of being more like commercial enterprises, with expert commercial management and ambitious expansion plans" (PC, 1999, p.21.22) than locally-based voluntary associations.

Older Club-goers

Club-going defies trends in associational participation for age, class and gender. I will now consider in greater detail what is known about older Australians' club use. Nationally, 2.5 million individuals are members of a registered club (The Allen Consulting Group, 2004)[23]. Membership in clubs has been growing (IPART, 2007), and may continue to grow as the Australian population ages (Veal & Darcy, 1993). With regard to age, the proportion of older Australians who attend clubs is significantly higher than in younger age groups (DASETT, 1991; Lynch & Veal, 1996; VCGR, 2005; Bennett et al., 1999; ABS, 2007). As a consequence, club participation is almost as high in the 85+ age group as any other age group (ABS, 2007). In one state (NSW) seventy percent of people aged over 55 were members of a club (Dawson, 2004) - a rate eighteen percent higher than for the NSW population as a whole. Older people's participation in clubs may increase in the future, as the club industry turns its attention to the "lucrative" "senior market" (Bjorksater-Bleylock, 2006, p.90). Statistics about the social class of older club-goers are not available, but the membership as a whole has been described as "working class" (Wild, 1974; Lynch, 1990; Bennett et al., 1999). It has been noted, however, that clubs may be used mainly by a particular sub-group of the working class – the respectable' working class (Caldwell,

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[23] Breaking this down by state: in NSW - where clubs are the most numerous - 53% of adults hold at least one club membership (Dawson, 2004). In Queensland, it is claimed by the (Clubs Queensland, 2006) website, that 92% of adult Queenslanders are club members. Eighty percent of adult "Canberrans" are club members (Licensed Clubs Association of the ACT, 2005), as are two million Victorians (Licensed Clubs Association of Victoria, 2006).

1972)[24]. Within clubs, the voluntary management is of the same (working) class as the ordinary members (Bryson & Thompson, 1972; Bennett et al., 1999; Baum et al., 2000b). More men attend clubs than women (Baum et al., 2000b); for members aged over sixty-five years, approximately fifty-six percent have been found to be male and forty-four percent, female (Prosser, Hing, Breen & Weeks, 1997).

These rates and patterns of participation suggest that club-going is part of the lives of millions of older people - especially working class older people - and may continue to be so in the future. Furthermore, participation may be particularly important in the context of reduced participation generally in later life (Baum, Palmer, Modra, Murray & Bush, 2000a). I will now review the small body of research which sheds some light on the functional role of clubs in the lives of older club-goers.

The Functional Role of Club Participation

Registered clubs in Australia have not been the subject of a great deal of academic attention (Hing, 2000)[25]. Club participation has been noted in some community studies (Wild, 1974; Oxley, 1978; Dempsey, 1990c), in histories of gambling, leisure and the RSL (O'Hara, 1988; Charlton, 1987; McMillen, 1996; Lynch & Veal, 2006; Sekuless & Rees, 1986), and given some (very limited) consideration in the cultural and leisure studies literature (Bennett et al., 1999; Lynch, 1990; Livingstone, 2005b). A number of sociological studies which focused on individual clubs were undertaken in the 1970s (Vinson & Robinson, 1970; Hogan, 1970; Caldwell, 1972).   The gambling studies literature has considered clubs for their contribution to problem gambling (for example, Dickerson, Bayliss & Head, 1984; Prosser et al., 1997), and as a backdrop to studies - some qualitative - focusing on the characteristics, behaviour and experience of poker

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[24] Clubs are, and have always been, working class – perhaps, in the case of many clubs, because of their working class roots in the RSL. About the RSL: "The membership is largely self-educated: the men of World War One who remained in control of the League until well after World War Two had few formal educational opportunities, and the men and women who served from 1939 to 1945 received their education in uniform" (Sekuless & Rees, 1986, p.1). Referring to the "egalitarian nature of the League", Sekuless & Rees (1986) goes on "the League has been a social and spiritual home for less-wealthy and less-educated veterans, and although affluent and professional veterans are often loyal members of the League, they have alternative avenues for fellowship" (p.1).

[25] The focus on clubs as gambling venues has meant that "other roles and functions of the club sector (for example, provision of leisure facilities, community contributions and advancement of social, recreational and sporting interests), have been "largely ignored" (Hing, 2000, p.480). This observation is supported by Coomber, Lee, Lee & Cairncross (2006) who suggests that more research is needed including into "social issues" and the "contribution of clubs to the community" (Coomber et al., 2006, p.110).

machine users (Brown & Coventry, 1997; Kimberley, 2005).   Clubs have also been considered from a hospitality industry perspective (Hing & McMillen, 2002; Buultjens & Howard, 2001).   Finally, a source of literature that provides some insight into the experience of club participation is the discourse relating to regulatory issues (for example, Prosser et al., 1997; AIGR, 1999; PC, 1999; IPART, 2007).   Little of this, however, sheds any light on the experience of older club-goers.

I will draw on this and other research to review what is known about the role of club-going in the lives of older members.   I will consider first its social role, and then move on to the role of the club in managing everyday life.

Registered clubs are an important part of the social life of many older Australians (PC, 1999), and have been credited with contributing to the social integration of the working class in Australia. The clubs industry has been described as a "social institution" (Street, 1991) which has played a role in "civilising" the working class (Pringle, 1968), in "changing social habits" (Charlton, 1987), and as being a "haven for a 'respectable' working class" (Caldwell, 1974). Lynch & Veal (2006) identifies the "particularly important role" played by clubs through their provision of social and other facilities (p.168).

Although it would seem that no gerontological studies have directly addressed registered club participation, a few have noted club-use in the context of older people's community involvement. Social uses of clubs include meeting with valued friends and attending clubs in the absence of alternative social activities (Plath, 1990; Fine, 1992; Russell, 1996). Older men, in particular, used clubs in preference to "organised" activities (Russell & Porter, 2003), and men's preference for socialising at clubs has also been noted (Riggs, 1997).

Some research has also shed light on the instrumental role of club participation for older club-goers, including its role in social support and enabling access to affordable resources, such as food. The social support function of clubs is noted by the Australian Capital Territory Government (2003) which stated that clubs provide a "safe environment where older Canberrans [26] are known, recognised and have a sense of belonging" (ACT Government, 2000, p.28).   Clubs are able to provide services at relatively low prices

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[26] Canberra is the capital city of the Australian Capital Territory, and of Australia.

because of subsidisation by poker machine revenue (PC, 1999; Lynch, 1990).   The affordability of clubs may be particularly beneficial for financially disadvantaged older people, who have less access to alternative sources of entertainment and services (CCCANZ, 2001).   Clubs generally provide inexpensive, good quality and substantial meals (NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition, 2003; Fine & Thompson, 1995) - an attraction for older men, in particular (Russell et al., 2001).   Despite the relative affordability of clubs, some barriers to access remain for some older people (Russell & Porter, 2003). This is summed up by NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition, 2003, which concluded that:

> Although subsidised club meals are highly valued by people on low incomes, the meal cost, the dress code, and the social norms of most clubs do tend to exclude the most destitute and needy members of the community (NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition, 2003, p.38).

Another aspect of managing everyday life which was noted in a previous section was the *experiential*, including the experience of pleasure and excitement. Little research bears on this aspect of club participation, although one ethnographic study of club-based poker machine playing has addressed this (Lynch, 1990).   This study noted, amongst other things, the role of "excitement and stimulation" as a motivation for poker machine playing (Lynch, 1990, p.200; also Caldwell, 1985a).

Club participation seems to provide a range of social and instrumental benefits for members and it is likely that such benefits occur, at least in part, because of the social networks within the club. I will now turn to a consideration of social capital, which has been chosen as a framework for interpreting club-based social processes.

Section III: Social Capital as a Conceptual Framework

Social network participation – whether informal or associational (including in clubs) - benefits from being understood within a social capital framework. The value of using a social capital perspective in this instance lies in the capacity of social capital to illuminate the connection between network structure and function (on the one hand), and the accessible resources for producing outcomes (on the other). In this section, I will overview the concept of social capital - considering how it is located in different types of networks, and then consider outcomes that may be expected to flow from it. Following that, I

examine what is known about social capital in later life, before addressing mechanisms of social capital creation.

Voluntary Associations and Social Capital

Recent interest in social capital has stimulated a renewed interest in the study of voluntary associations (Norris & Inglehart, 2003). In fact, voluntary associations have taken centre stage in some conceptualisations of social capital. A 'communitarian perspective', such as that held by Putnam et al. (1993), for example, equates social capital with voluntary associational participation (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Voluntary associations are singled out as a source of social capital because of their presumed role in building trust and civic-minded behaviour, fundamental to social capital (Knack & Keefer, 1997). Coffé & Geys (2007a) explains this mechanism, without endorsing it:

> Association membership empowers individuals and develops their democratic values, generalized trust, cooperative norms, racial and religious tolerance, and so on. At least, such arguments have been a recurrent theme in the social capital literature (Coffé & Geys, 2007a, p.387)

Consistent with this privileging of voluntary associations over other potential sources of social capital, measures of social capital have often used associational participation as a proxy indicator. This has included, for example, measures of the density of membership in civic organisations (Cannuscio, Block & Kawachi, 2003; PC, 2003).

Empirical support is lacking, however, for a strong connection between associational participation and social capital, prompting Newton (1999) to conclude that the influence of voluntary associations is "generally weak, though not trivial" (Coffé & Geys, 2007a, p.387; also Cox & Caldwell, 2000). In a rare qualitative study investigating sources of social capital (rather than just its associations), voluntary associations "played a very minor role" in the creation of social capital (Campbell & Gillies, 2001, p.399).

There is, however, a sense in which voluntary associations are, unproblematically, a source of social capital, and this is their role as contexts for social relations. For this reason - if for no other - it is worthwhile to explore the nature of social capital in voluntary associations.

My Conceptualisation of Social Capital

Fundamentally, social capital is "rooted in social networks and social relations" (Lin, 1999, p.35). All descriptions of it refer in some way to social capital's basis in social networks. For Coleman (1988), social capital "inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors" (p.S98), while for Putnam, the "connections among individuals" (Putnam, 2000) are central (OECD, 2001). Bourdieu's (1986) description of social capital also points to the role of networks, while also clearly locating it in the *resources* in those networks:

> [Social capital is] the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are
> linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized
> relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words,
> to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the
> backing of the collectivity-owned capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p.248-9).

Bourdieu's understanding of social capital has been described as a "resource approach". Formulations of social capital which reflect such an approach conceive of social capital as "access to resources available within social networks, resources that are used in purposive action to establish or maintain individual and group advantages" (Glover & Hemingway, 2005, p.395).

In this research, I have adopted a resource approach to social capital. I see social capital as being the resources that exist in social networks – resources that are available because of the existence of those networks and, more specifically, because of the way the network functions. To access social capital, then, is to utilise the resources made available by the existence of networks. Outcomes of social capital are the result of accessing and utilising social capital.

The following discussion of social capital draws upon a framework developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) that is intended to provide "a way of organising and relating … different approaches" to social capital (2004, p.vii). The framework describes structural properties of social networks, as well as aspects of their functioning ('transactions' and 'qualities'), which account for features of social capital:

> "Social capital resources are presented as attributes of networks,
> organised as network qualities, structure, transactions and broad types
> (bonding, bridging and linking). Potential network participants (such as

families, friends, organisations/groups) are indicated by network composition." (ABS, 2004, p.5).

The components of the network, including bonding, bridging and linking social capital, will be explored in the remainder of this section. The framework is presented diagrammatically (Figure 1 below):

Culture
E.g. Language
History
Gender
Religions
Sports
Cultural Events
Arts

Culture and Political, Legal and Institutional Conditions

Social capital

Political
E.g. Separation of powers
Universal adult suffrage
Transparency of political process
Rule of law
Representative elected government

4. Network Types
4.1 Bonding
4.2 Bridging
4.3 Linking

3. Network transactions
3.1 Sharing support
Physical/financial assistance
Emotional support
Encouragement
Integration into community
Common action
3.2 Sharing knowledge
Skills and information
Introductions
3.3 Negotiation
3.4 Applying sanctions

Network composition
Family
    -In-household
    -Ex-household
Friends
Neighbours
Colleagues
Organisations/groups
    -Government
    -Not for profit
    -Commercial
People in general
Acquaintances

1. Network qualities
1.1 Norms
Trust/Trustworthiness
Reciprocity
Sense of efficacy
Cooperation
Acceptance of diversity
Inclusiveness
1.2 Common purpose
Social participation
*Civic participation
*Community support
Friendship
Economic participation
(* includes voluntary work)

2. Network structure
2.1 Size
2.2 Openess Density
2.3 Communication mode
2.4 Transience/mobility
2.5 Power relationships

Legal
E.g. Independant judiciary
Criminal, civil, contract, property and constitutional law
Protection against arbitrary arrest and detention
Transparency of legal process
International conventions and agreements
Freedoms of: speech; association; assembly; religion; the press; movement
Right to a fair trial, legal representation, presumption of innocence
Regulatory mechanisms and framework

Institutional
E.g. Agents of policy implementation and review
    (e.g. Ombudsman, Administrative Appeals Tribunal)
Institutions for the promotion of economic stability
    (e.g. Reserve Bank, International Monetary Fund)

Positive effects of social capital
E.g. Network development
Identity and sense of belonging
Increased knowledge/understanding
Increased confidence in community capacity to achieve goals
Community resilience
Satisfactory locus of control
Lowering of transaction costs
Conflict resolution

Negative effects of social capital
E.g. Social exclusion or intolerance of difference (unbalanced bonding)
Reduced family functioning (unbalanced bridging)
Corruption (unbalanced linking)
Community breakdown

Figure 1: The ABS (2004) Social Capital Framework

I will now use this framework to describe certain types of social networks and the social capital that they contain.

Social Networks and Social Capital

A network has a particular "composition" and may consist of family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, organisations and groups, "people in general" or acquaintances (ABS, 2004, p.19).

Informal Networks of Family and Friends

Informal networks of family and friends are horizontal connections which are said to be characterised by "strong ties" (Lin, Cook & Burt, 2001; Field, Schuller & Baron, 2000). According to Putnam & Goss (2002):

> Strong ties are defined in terms of the frequency of contact and closedness. If all of my friends are friends of each other and I spend a lot of time with them, we have a strong tie. (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p10).

Strong ties are associated with 'bonding social capital' which is "inward looking and tend[s] to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups" (Putnam, 2000, p.22-3). These ties are generally between network members who are "like one another in important respects (ethnicity, age, gender, social class, and so on)" (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p.11), so that networks which are homogeneous underpin bonding social capital (Franke, 2005).

Casual Relationships and Interactions

Another network component is the relationship characterised by casual interaction, such as the relationship between acquaintances or 'generalised relationships' (Stone & Hughes, 2002). This, too, is a horizontal connection. I am including, in this category, connections between strangers or near-strangers which involve casual interaction. These connections are generally 'weak' ties, and may "cross … social divides based on religion, class, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p.230); in this way, networks incorporating weak ties are generally composed of more heterogeneous individuals than in groups with strong ties. These networks support "bridging social capital" which is found in "social networks that bring together people who are unlike one another" (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p.11). Heterogeneity, or diversity, of network members underlies bridging social capital (Stone & Hughes, 2002). Ties characterised by bridging

social capital "are outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages" (Putnam, 2000, p.22-3).

The notion that strong ties support bonding social capital and weak ties support bridging social capital is almost axiomatic in the social capital literature. There is reason, however, to suspect that the situation is not so clear cut. Some empirical investigations of social networks have found counter-examples to this distinction. Strong ties - in homogeneous networks - were found to be a source of bridging social capital by Leonard & Onyx (2003) who conclude that "loose and strong ties are not synonymous with bridging and bonding" (p.189). Such counter-examples point to the need for examining specific networks in action, rather than inferring the nature of ties within a network from the (easy to measure) structural similarities, or differences, between network members.

The weaker ties in these networks of casual interactions may also support 'linking' social capital - a sub-type of bridging social capital (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004) which inheres in "networks that connect actors of different degrees of institutional power" (Putnam, 2004, p.669). Some of the ties in this category, such as those between strangers or near strangers, might be so 'weak' as to be 'negligible' (Granovetter, 1973). Being neither weak nor strong, such ties would not be expected to be a source of social capital. Recently, Putnam (Putnam & Goss, 2002) appears to allow the possibility that such ties could possess social capital of some sort. In making a distinction between "thick" and "thin" social capital, Putnam & Goss (2002) contrasts them in the following way:

> There are also very thin, almost invisible filaments of social capital, such as the nodding acquaintance you have with the person you occasionally see waiting in line at the supermarket, or even a chance encounter with another person in an elevator. Even these very casual forms of social connection have been shown experimentally to induce a certain form of reciprocity; merely nodding to a stranger increases the likelihood that he or she will come to your aid if you are suddenly stricken (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p.10).

I will return to the role of "negligible ties" in a later chapter.

Organisations

What is the contribution of an organisation or group – as a network member – to network social capital? One option is that ties with an organisation support linking social capital[27], and this would certainly be appropriate when the tie is characterised by a power gradient.

However, ties with organisations are often more appropriately characterised as having a certain degree of 'attachment', 'sense of place' or 'sense of belonging'; this suggests that their contribution may be more to a bonding type of social capital than to a linking type.

Social Capital and Voluntary Associations

The above discussion indicates that it is appropriate to distinguish between the social capital located in horizontal relationships which are enacted in a voluntary association setting and the relationship with the voluntary association itself. In addition, the fact that voluntary associations such as clubs contain more than one type of relationship (friends, families, acquaintances, strangers and so on) suggests that they may well contribute to more than one type of social capital. As Putnam has noted "most groups blend bridging and bonding, but the blends differ" (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p.12).

In the next section, I will apply this understanding to the connections between network properties and social capital types to possible outcomes of social capital – "getting by" and "getting ahead".

Outcomes: "Getting By" and "Getting Ahead"

Social capital is of little interest if it does not have beneficial outcomes for network participants. From a resource perspective, social capital outcomes result from network participants utilising the social capital resources that exist in a network. Outcomes may be at the *macro-, meso-* or *micro*-level (Halpern, 2005). A wide range of outcomes - of "varying social scale" (Stone & Hughes, 2002, p.1) - has been discussed in the social capital literature. At the macro- level, outcomes include poverty reduction and sustainable development (The World Bank, 2008); at the meso-level outcomes include an "increased capacity of the community to achieve goals" (ABS, 2004, p.19), increased social cohesion

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[27] This possibility is suggested by Stone & Hughes's (2002) categorising of ties with organisations as an "institutional relationship".

(Narayan, 1999), and reduced health inequalities (Osborne et al., 2008)[28]. This discussion will now focus on social capital outcomes at the micro-level; that is outcomes for individuals.

This discussion of social capital outcomes will use the distinction between 'getting by' and 'getting ahead' as an organising principle, as it is effective for relating outcomes to types of social capital. 'Getting by' and 'getting ahead' have been popularised as outcomes of social capital by Putnam (2000, p.23), who adopted the distinction from de Souza Briggs (1998). The distinction is explained in this way:

> Individuals of all backgrounds need a two-sided treasure chest of social capital: access to social support that helps us cope with life's stresses and challenges (''get by'') and access to social leverage, the key to mobility or ''getting ahead.''" (de Souza Briggs, 1998, p.206).

'Getting by' and 'getting ahead' are outcomes which have been attributed to different types of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000), and I will now describe the connections between social capital types and their proposed outcomes.

Bonding Social Capital and 'Getting By'

'Getting by' is an outcome of bonding social capital (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Stone & Hughes, 2002). Social and psychological support is needed for 'getting by', and bonding social capital is "best suited" to this purpose (Keating et al., 2005). Physical and mental health are also needed for 'getting by', and are promoted by bonding social capital (Poortinga, 2006b; Osborne et al., 2008). Given this, bonding social capital is clearly of fundamental importance, yet a "dark side" has also been noted (Putzel, 1997; Cox & Caldwell, 2000; Coffé & Geys, 2007b)[29]. Social capital theorists have drawn attention to

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[28] Community and national level outcomes of the operation of club-based social capital has been noted by the club industry. The CCCANZ (1999), for example, in its submission to a gambling industry inquiry (PC, 1999), claim that "clubs improve the quality of life of communities by providing social capital that enhances physical and mental well being. These real community benefits flow through to the national economy in the form of improved workplace productivity and decreased reliance on health and social security infrastructures. Clubs by their existence provide a significant tangible and intangible contribution to their community" (CCCANZ, 1999, p.15).

[29] Outcomes of social capital are usually treated as positive (Cox, 1998), and "there is a presumption in much of the literature that social capital … generally has beneficial impacts" (PC, 2003, p.15), and leads to "outcomes of mutual benefit" (Stone & Hughes, 2002, p.1). Cox & Caldwell (2000) go further, and argues that it is not social capital if the outcome is negative.

possible negative outcomes of bonding social capital, arguing that homogeneous networks underpinning the bonding social capital in some groups which has the potential to:

> reinforce pre-existing social stratification, prevent mobility of excluded groups, minorities or poor people, and become the bases of corruption and co-option of power by the dominant social groups (Narayan, 1999, p.13).

The effect of this concern about the dark side of bonding social capital is that bridging social capital has become the 'gold standard':

> The external effects of bridging networks are likely to be positive, while bonding networks (limited within particular social niches) are at greater risk of producing negative externalities. This is not to say that bonding groups are necessarily bad; indeed, evidence suggests that most of us get our social support from bonding rather than bridging social ties. (Putnam & Goss, 2002, p.11)

Bridging Social Capital and 'Getting Ahead'

The value of bridging social capital is seen to lie in its contribution to 'getting ahead'. External (bridging) ties create overlapping networks which "may make accessible the resources and opportunities which exist in one network to a member of another" (Stone & Hughes, 2002, p.4), thus enabling participants to "leverage their contacts' resources" (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p.24). Bridging social capital is generally seen as being a feature of heterogeneous social networks (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001). Such ties have been found to help network participants to 'get ahead' in a number of ways: the cross-group ties in heterogenous networks facilitate the flow of information (Teorell, 2003), providing access to broader sources of information (Adler & Kwon, 2002), hence improving resource access (Lin, 2000). Employment opportunities have been found to improve in networks with high bridging social capital (Granovetter, 1973; Narayan, 1999), as has academic achievement (Coleman, 1988; Bekkers et al., 2008).

In the next section I will consider social capital outcomes in the particular context of later life, after first addressing the importance of social capital for older people, and the extent to which older people have access to social capital.

Social Capital in Later Life

Social capital in later life has been the subject of little research (Barr & Russell, 2006). My review of the scant literature on this topic has raised many questions and yielded few answers. I will address two main questions now: Does the importance of social capital increase with age? Are older people able to access sufficient social capital?

The Need for - and Availability of - Social Capital in Later Life

It has been proposed that community-level social capital increases in importance in later life, as "critical parts" of an older person's social ties are lost (Cannuscio et al., 2003, p.395; also Nyqvist et al., 2006). Similarly, as informal social networks are lost - along with the social capital they support - the importance of a person's organisational involvements may increase, along with the social capital which they support. This raises the possibility that social capital in voluntary associations may be more important for older people than for other age groups. It may also be the case that the need for social capital *per se* – regardless of its location - increases as other resources, such as finances and physical ability, become less available. Finally, the loss of social networks in later life may impact differently on different types of social capital – bonding, bridging and linking (Barr & Russell, 2006).

Since there is reason to believe that social capital may increase in importance in later life, the question arises: Are older people able to access sufficient social capital? Some social capital researchers have concluded that later life is associated with higher levels of social capital (Putnam, 1996; Putnam, 2000; Patterson, 2007; Bekkers et al., 2008), whereas others have concluded the opposite (Frytak, Harley & Finch, 2003). Lack of agreement on how social capital is defined and measured, as well as overlooking differences amongst older people, has led to contradictory conclusions.

Social capital appears reduced in later life when it is interpreted predominantly as an aspect of network structure, such as network size or density. Used as an indicator of social capital, "level of connectedness" (which combines measures of network size and connections with groups and associations) was found to be negatively correlated with age (Stone, 2001), suggesting that when social capital is understood this way, it indeed reduces with advancing age. When social capital is defined differently, the correlation with age is positive; in the same study, "overall level of trust and reciprocity" – constructs commonly used in defining social capital – were found to be positively associated with age.

Another reason why different studies have arrived at different conclusions about the amount of social capital available to older people is that different studies measure social capital in different ways. Measuring the number of organisational memberships, as a proxy for social capital is likely to find a reduction in social capital with age (Nyqvist et al., 2006). It has been observed that, with regard to gender, measures of social capital may 'select in' activities dominated by men, while 'selecting out' activities dominated by women (Lowndes, 2004). Selectivity of this sort is also possible with activities which vary by age. For example, some measures of social capital measure aspects of employment-based networks (Onyx & Bullen, 1998), which may lead to older people's social capital being underestimated. Finally, studies which have found a higher level of social capital in later life may be affected by confounding from a cohort affect, in that the generation or generations that are currently in older age groups may have had a higher level of joining throughout their lives, which is picked up in measures of social capital (British Office of National Statistics, 2001).

A further impediment to a satisfactory answer to the question of whether or not older people are able to access sufficient social capital is knowing exactly *whose* social capital is being investigated. Older people are not an homogeneous group, and structural factors such as class and gender interact with age to affect the availability of social capital (Lin, 2000; Campbell & Gillies, 2001). An older middle-class man, for example, may well have good access to social capital, while an older working class woman may not.

Putnam has been accused of offering a theory of social capital that "ignores and bypasses class divisions" (Englebert, 2001, p.2). It is known, however, that people who are more privileged generally have better access to social capital (Baum et al., 2000b; Ziersch, 2005; Osborne et al., 2008). Gender, too, has been neglected within the social capital literature (Lowndes, 2004). A review of the literature on gender and social capital has concluded that "women and men possess similar levels of social capital", although it may be of different types, from different sources and have different outcomes (Lowndes, 2004, p.50).

The above considerations suggest that older people may well have less access to social capital than younger age groups - young, married, educated, and well-off people have "plenty of social capital" (Nieminen, Martelin, Koskinen, Simpura, Alanen, Harkanen & Arpo, 2008, p.406). But, once again, the situation may not be as straightforward as this. It may depend, this time, on what type of social capital is being considered. Bonding, but not

bridging, social capital appears to increase with age (Patterson, 2007) – a fact which should not come as a surprise given the tendency towards homogeneity of older people's networks.

Social Capital Outcomes for Older People

I will now revisit social capital outcomes as they may apply in later life. Challenges of later life can result in a diverse range of needs, such as needs for health maintenance, the capacity to manage activities of daily living, personal security, social and instrumental support (such as from family), companionship, identity affirmation and a sense of inclusion. Is it possible for such needs to be met as an outcome of social capital? The list of needs appears to be needs associated with 'getting by' rather than 'getting ahead'. There is no 'need' for finding a job, or securing a place at a top university. The needs appear to be, largely, best met within cohesive networks with bonding social capital. It is perhaps for these reasons that some have argued that bonding social capital is more important in later life than bridging: "structural social capital, i.e. social networks, social integration[30] and attachment, is a relevant resource for the oldest old" (Nyqvist et al., 2006, p.108). Scharf, Phillips, Kingston & Smith (2000) observes that:

> While integration in 'weak' networks has been shown to be important to unemployed people seeking work, for older people it has been assumed that it is more important to have 'strong' networks (Scharf et al., 2000, p.8).

It is difficult to say whether this view is a *cause* or an *effect* of gerontology's concentration on older people's relationship with family and friends. But in either case, a consequence is that little consideration has been given to the role of *bridging* social capital in later life (Keating et al., 2005; Barr & Russell, 2006).

Linking social capital has, along with bonding, been considered appropriate for older people, since older people may have a greater need for access to "economic, social and political institutions and services available in the community". This is because these are "critical determinants" of whether an older person is able to maintain self-reliance (Barr & Russell, 2006, p.212; also (Stone, 2003a).

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[30] "Social integration", as it is used here, "taps into what Putnam (2000) calls bonding relationships" (Nyqvist et al., 2006, p.96)

This brief discussion of the relevance of different types of social capital to later life indicates that it is not possible to be definitive about what sorts of networks – and hence which types of social capital – are most beneficial in old age. Furthermore, the questions whether older people have sufficient access to social capital, and of what type, is also difficult to answer at this time.

The Mechanisms of Social Capital Creation

While research has focused on measuring social capital, and its correlates, the means by which social capital is created in networks has gone largely unexplored. With regard to social capital in voluntary associations, Edwards, Franklin & Holland (2003) caution that:

> statistical analysis of participation in voluntary associations as an indication of the presence of social capital is only half the story. The meanings and motivations that volunteers invest in their actions is equally important. It is not enough to establish the presence of a network, there is also a need to examine its content in practice (Edwards et al., 2003, p.13).

This requires attention to *process* - a temporal phenomenon which is not easily captured using methodologies frequently employed in social capital research, such as (cross-sectional) surveys. Exploring mechanisms of social capital creation requires attention to social network process *in situ*, and over time. Qualitative interview studies, such as that by Leonard & Onyx, (2003), have shed light on the social capital creation process, while necessarily leaving unexamined the process as it occurs in practice.

The creation of social capital is a process in which network participants actively engage. Strategies used by people to manage change in later life involve, as we have seen, engaging with social networks, and in doing this older voluntary association members are actors in the creation of social capital. The contribution by older people to social capital in their personal networks reflects active engagement in the social capital creation process more generally, prompting Cannuscio et al. (2003) to observe that "the elderly are represented on both the supply and demand sides of social capital within the community" (p.399). Older people, therefore, play a "critical role" in the functioning of communities and families (Warburton & McLaughlin, 2005, p.726).

This section draws, once again, on the mechanisms of 'community formation' discussed in the context of voluntary associations[31].

Contribution of Context: Place

Social capital is created in social networks, and those networks are located within a context. Although often overlooked, context may be "critical to social capital's generation" (Cattell, 2004, p.947). In addition to influencing how – and how much – social capital is created, context affects the impact of social capital on outcomes (Keating et al., 2005). Contexts include aspects of the social, political, economic and cultural environment (Keating et al., 2005), as well as the spatial and organisational. The way in which context affects the structure and function of network interaction is, therefore, a mechanism of social capital creation.

Features of context that impact on social capital in a local area have been referred to as 'local opportunity structures' (Macintyre & Ellaway, 2000; Baum & Palmer, 2002). The following description of opportunity structures is couched in terms of health, but it is equally applicable in the context of social participation:

> [Opportunity structures] are socially constructed and socially patterned features of the physical and social environment which may promote or damage health either directly or indirectly through the possibilities they provide for people to live healthy lives (Macintyre & Ellaway, 2000, p. 343).

The value of using this concept to understand contexts of social capital creation is that it does not privilege some contexts over others, such as the social over the physical. Place-based contextual features include the organisational and physical context, and this section will consider the latter of these[32].

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[31] This raises the question: What is the connection between social capital and 'community'? Putnam (2000) describes community as the "conceptual cousin" of social capital (p.21). It is not clear, however, just how they are related (Colclough & Sitaraman, 2005). One confusion, for example, is that community has been conceptualised as both those social networks in which social capital is created, and as an outcome of social capital (Long & Perkins, 2007) - which parallels an earlier distinction between "community as variable" and "community as object" (Calhoun, 1980, in Gilleard et al., 2007, p.590). I do not attempt to clarify this distinction, as 'community' is used here in a general sense, and one which is akin to group cohesion.

[32] Organisational context will be discussed in Chapter 4 along with the relevant data.

As pointed out by Bennett & Bennett (1970), "social interaction… takes place in a physical world full of objects, their modifiers, movement, and change – not in a vacuum" (p.195). Features of this 'physical world' affect social interaction. Thoughts and actions - which underpin social network interaction - are shaped by physical buildings, places and objects (Smith & Bugni, 2006; Halford, 2008). Social processes such as friendship formation, helping and small group interaction have been found empirically to be impacted by their physical setting (Bitner, 1992), and even occur "through" them (Gieryn, 2000).

Through its role in shaping social networks, physical context also shapes social capital (Baum & Palmer, 2002; Cattell, 2001; Colclough & Sitaraman, 2005; Eilers, Lucey & Stein, 2007; Misztal, 2005; Veenstra, 2005). Places influence social interaction by suggesting possibilities for interaction, action and values (Smith & Bugni, 2006). More specifically, certain features of a physical environment "define the possibilities and limits of social episodes" (Forgas, 1979, cited in Bitner, 1992, p.61). Such features include propinquity, seating arrangements, size and flexibility (Bitner, 1992). The extent to which strangers and acquaintances will begin informal interaction, for example, depends on aspects of the physical context (Fayard & Weeks, 2007).

The next two sections address social capital mechanisms which are network- rather than place-based. They are, of course, not independent, since physical features of context influence the structure and function of networks. Network structure will be discussed followed by functional features of networks.

Network Structure

Structural features of social networks underpin mechanisms of social capital creation, and include network size, frequency of interaction between network members, and network density - the interconnectedness of people within the network. Structural network features create social capital because:

> where everyone in a network is known to all others and actively and regularly interact, there are likely to be higher quality personal relationships, a higher level of trustworthiness in the network, and strongly-based obligations and expectations (ABS, 2004, p.67).

These structural features of networks are dependent upon, to a large extent, network diversity – that is the extent to which the network is heterogeneous or homogeneous (see p.49).

The size of a network is a factor in the formation of group cohesion or 'community' (Keith, 1980) and is also a factor in the formation of social capital (Coffé & Geys, 2008). Smaller networks enable participants to get to know one another, building attachment. Additionally, smaller networks enable more effective social control (Paldam & Svendsen, 1999).

Another structural aspect of networks is the frequency or intensity of interaction between participants, that is, "how often people or groups have contact with others in their various networks, as well as the duration of this contact" (ABS, 2004). 'Intensity of interaction' is an important adjunct to 'frequency of interaction' since it is an indication of the value that network participants place on their relationships (Victor, 2005).

A final aspect of network structure to be considered here is network density:

> People relate to each other in a variety of different settings, in homes, schools, workplaces, churches, clubs and societies, local shops and entertainment venues. The degree to which the same people occur in each of these settings and networks, and share a variety of common interests, is a measure of density (ABS, 2004, p.74).

In a dense network, social capital is generated through high levels of cooperation (Stone, 2001) and norm reinforcement (van Willigen, 1989). Along the same lines, network density influences access to resources, since it facilitates knowledge of resource availability (Stone, 2001), whereas in a low density network, "sparse" connections may prevent members from being aware of available resources (ABS, 2004).

Network Function

The mechanisms involved in the creation and maintenance of social capital include the functioning of networks which are, as we have seen, of a certain structure, and which are embedded in a particular context. Using the ABS (2004) Framework once again, these functional properties of networks are 'transactions' and 'qualities'. In the Framework, 'transactions' describe the "advantages and obligations that network members or groups draw from social capital" (p.85), while 'qualities' include "the norms and values that may exist within networks" which "encourage people to act cooperatively" and to share knowledge and ideas (ABS, 2004, p.26).

The process of accessing a social network is a transaction which functions to create social capital since social capital refers, *inter alia*, to "the ability of individuals or groups to join

social networks and sustain them" (Franke, 2005, p.17)[33]. The mechanisms underlying the network access process have received little attention, perhaps because to study them would require extended periods of data collection.

Throughout the lifecourse, social networks are, to a greater or lesser extent, in a state of flux. New networks may be accessed as new relationships are formed and existing relationships change. Existing social network members may draw in new members - a typical access route to voluntary association membership (Norris & Inglehart, 2003, Bekkers et al., 2008). Dempsey (1990c) observed that "friends and relatives living 'down the street' and 'around the corner' do not hesitate to make use of the obligations and positive sentiments associated with such ties to recruit new members for their favourite organizations" (p.196).   As a consequence of this process, the weak ties of associational participation may transform into the strong ties of friendship (Brinkerhoff et al., 2004).

Empirical social capital research has determined associations between particular network qualities and levels of network social capital. Putnam et al. (1993), for example, describes levels of trust and reciprocity in networks, while a plethora of other survey-based research has explored these and other associations with social capital (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001; OECD, 2001; Li, Pickles & Savage, 2005; De Silva, Huttly, Harpham & Kenward, 2007). Network qualities include shared norms, such as the norms of reciprocity, and inclusiveness.

Some approaches to social capital, such as the 'communitarian' approach (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000), emphasise shared norms as a fundamental feature of social capital (Moore et al., 2005). This is in evidence in Putnam's definition of social capital as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam et al., 1993, p.167). Norms - "the rules, values and expectancies that characterize the community (or network) members" (Halpern, 2005, p.10) - function to build and maintain social capital. Norms encourage cooperative action (ABS, 2004), and are enforced by social control - "a combination of compliance, coercion and commitment to social values" (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1994, p.384). As shared norms are underpinned by shared values, beliefs, desires and expectations, they operate most effectively in homogeneous groups (Stone & Hughes,

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[33] This is recognised in the ABS (2004) Framework which includes as an aspect of social capital, "integration into community": "a process through which an individual or group is welcomed into a community or group, and made to feel accepted and included" (ABS, 2004, p.88).

2001; Coleman, 1990; Burt, 1992). This section discusses the specific norms of reciprocity and inclusiveness.

Reciprocity, as a norm (Gouldner, 1960), is "the expectation that people will return favors and strive to maintain a balance of obligation in social relationships" (Brinkerhoff et al., 2004, p.100) and is considered necessary for social capital (Putnam et al., 1993; Woolcock, 1998; Stone, 2001). Reciprocity can also be understood as contributing directly to social capital; that is, without reference to 'expectations of return', since reciprocal exchange within a network creates resources - a view which is more consistent with a resource approach to social capital such as Bourdieu's (1986). In this sense, reciprocity functions as a network transaction. This is generally the approach adopted by social anthropologists, some of whom have described the role of reciprocal interaction in 'community formation' in groups of older people (Keith, 1980; Furman, 1997); participants are "bound together" through such reciprocal interactions, since "receiving and giving are cyclical and mutually indebting" (Shield, 1997, p.474).

A type of reciprocal interaction which creates stronger connections between people is the sharing of food during a meal. This "bonding mechanism" (Visser, 1991) is an important reciprocal interaction for community formation: "those who share a table share the food and also their experiences and thoughts, giving them a special fellow feeling" (Sidenvall, Nydahl & Fjellstrom, 2000, p.406) and leading to "a feeling of community membership" (Quandt, Arcury, Bell, McDonald & Vitolins, 2001, p.145).

Another quality of a social network is the extent to which - and the way in which – the network is socially inclusive:

> Inclusiveness is the recognition and understanding of the different needs,
> abilities and aspirations of people, and the active creation of a supportive
> environment that allows people to meet their goals and make progress
> (ABS, 2004, p.38)

As a norm, 'inclusiveness' may include 'inclusive intimacy', which has been described as "a friendship pattern marked by … a readiness to expand group boundaries to include anyone important to any of the members, and by a tacit notion that the fulfilment of friendship is the gatherings themselves" (Marks, 1998, p.44). Networks which lack inclusiveness may create in-groups and out-groups, in which members of the in-group experience group cohesiveness, while members of the out-group experience exclusion.

Territoriality, which "involves personalization of or marking of a place or object and communication that it is 'owned' by a person or group." (Altman, 1975, p.107) cited in (Salari et al., 2006, p.238), can have this effect. To the extent that such territoriality is - intentionally or otherwise – exclusionary, it can be seen to "benefit some but disadvantage others" (Salari et al., 2006, p.237-238).

The norms described – reciprocity and inclusiveness - in combination with network transactions - are functions of networks which, in concert with network structure and occurring in a particular context, are the basic mechanisms by which social capital are created.

Social capital inheres in older people's social networks, informal and formal. Of the latter, voluntary associations, such as registered clubs, are a context for the functioning of these networks which, along with input from contextual and structural features, are the mechanisms of social capital creation. Not a great deal is known about social capital in later life, but there is evidence to suggest that older people, particularly working class older people, may have greater need of social capital resources, and yet have less access to them. There is also evidence to suggest that the balance of bonding and bridging social capital in later life is weighted more towards bonding social capital, which is associated with networks of support and solidarity. Such support and solidarity may assist older people to "get by", without so much helping to 'get ahead' – a social capital outcome which, it has been suggested, may not be as important in later life as in younger years.

Conclusion

This Background chapter has examined some aspects of social participation and social capital in later life, particularly as it relates to participation in voluntary associations and in registered clubs. Little is known about any aspect of club participation by older people, and an exploration of the nature, meaning and role of such participation is likely not only to provide new information but also to shed light on its contribution to social capital creation and outcomes of social capital for participants. In light of this, this research set out to discover the nature, meaning and role of registered club participation, and to address the following specific questions: *How do the older club-goers use the club – their activities, interactions, spatiotemporal patterns of use? How do the older people experience and interpret their involvement in the club?,* and *What role does the club play in the broader context of the older club-goer's life?.* Throughout the course of the research, I began to

consider the role of social capital in older people's club participation, which led to the further research objectives: *To identify, for this setting, the mechanisms by which social capital is created* and *To identify outcomes of social capital for the older club-goers.* An ethnographic methodology was judged most suitable for finding the answers to these questions, and this will described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to explore the nature, meaning and role of older people's registered club participation. The first section presents my perspective on the theoretical basis of social research - that is on epistemology, ontology and on theory - and describes the research's (ethnographic) design. I make explicit my assumptions about the nature of the social world, and the nature of social scientific knowledge. The second part of the chapter presents the methods used to collect, interpret and represent the data. Data collection methods included participant observation and in-depth interviewing; while qualitative data analysis techniques - including thematic analysis and narrative analysis - were used to create an interpretation which is presented here as an ethnographic report. The section ends with a description of steps taken to ensure that they research was conducted in an ethical way. The third and final section of the chapter addresses the quality of the research and presents an account of descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity.

Perspectives on Theory and Design

This study has adopted a theoretical perspective which is *constructionist* in its epistemology (Maxwell, 1992; Crotty, 1998) and *critical realist* in its ontology (Bhaskar, 1989). My approach to social action is *interpretivist*, with a leaning towards *symbolic interactionism* (Blumer, 1969). These theoretical underpinnings support this study's *ethnographic design*.

Theoretical Perspective

A precondition for my choice of research topic was that, in addressing it, I would develop an understanding of qualitative research. I was often disappointed by the "peculiar lifelessness" (Dixey & Talbot, 1982, p.19) of many quantitative gerontological studies,

which appeared to be lacking in "authenticity and meaning" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.20), and I believed that a qualitative methodology could overcome these shortcomings. My choice of methodology was underpinned by my understanding of how we come to know the (social) world and by my understanding of the nature of the (social) world - that is, by my understanding of epistemology and ontology.

Perspective on Knowledge: Constructionism

From an epistemological standpoint, I saw the empirical world, though real, as not holding inherent meaning, independent of interpretation – a constructionist epistemology:

> All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998, p.42)

Such an epistemology did not, I believe, prevent me from holding an essentially realist ontology. Although it is not possible to "step outside" our own experience to get an independent account of experience (Maxwell, 1992), reality does not "shift" from the empirical world to the "realm of imagery and conception" (Blumer, 1969, p.22). If it did, the social world would lack "stable properties", ruling out the possibility of systematic research (Silverman, 2006, p.47). There are, then, "lawful" and "reasonably stable" relationships among social phenomena and our understanding of phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.4). This is an ontological position which has been labeled "critical realism" by Bhaskar (1989) [34], who explains how this relates to methodology:

> the ontological specificities of the subject-matter of social science permit a non-arbitrary procedure for arriving at (fallible and iteratively corrigible) real definitions of forms of social life (Bhaskar, 1989, p189)

In terms of the research process, such a perspective is at odds with "positivism" – an understanding of research which sees 'social facts' as being independent of the research process and of its participants (Silverman, 2006).

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[34] This position is also known as "subtle realism" (Hammersley, 1992, p.69). This is a position which is distinguishable from "naïve realism", which sees meaning as existing independently of interpretation.

Perspective on Theory: Interpretivism

My theoretical perspective must also account for human behaviour and for social action in particular.   Human behaviour cannot be understood without reference to the actor's subjective meanings, such as intentions, beliefs and feelings[35].   I found interpretivist approaches, such as those espoused by Berger & Luckmann, 1966), fitted best with this understanding.   In particular, I found symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) most consistent with a constructionist epistemology, as well as acknowledging the subjectivity of meaning-making.   Symbolic interactionism was also attractive to me because of its realism.   Blumer, for example, advises social researchers to "respect the nature of the empirical world and organize a methodological stance to reflect that respect" (1969, p.60).   He set out three premises that are appropriate underpinnings for the methodology used in this research.   The first (the significance of which I have already alluded to) is that "people act towards things on the basis of the meaning that these things have for them, not on the basis of the meaning that these things have for the outside scholar" (Blumer, 1969, p.51).   It follows from this that "sociological observers must interpret, that is give meanings to, the meanings established by participants" (Waters, 1994, p.7).   Blumer's second premise emphasises that participants' meanings are derived from *social* processes, and not in some other way.   Social processes are therefore a *context* for meaning-making. Context is not restricted to the social context; other aspects - although not independent of the social - are also factors in meaning-making.   These include the "verbal context" (Brazil, 1995; Thomas, 1995), the "context of situation" (Malinowski, 1923; Halliday, 1994) and the cultural context (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).   This suggests that research, in order to understand meaning, needs to take account of all of these. Finally, Blumer's third premise, that "meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process" (1969, p.2), points to the *active* nature of meaning-making, which highlights the necessity for accessing (to the extent that it is possible) those internal processes of active construction.

Methodological Implications of Perspectives

I see three main methodological implications following from the theoretical perspective described.   Firstly, I need to *observe* setting, actions, interactions and features of context;

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[35] This view stemmed from an understanding I developed from my studies in the discipline of psychology. It seemed to me that behaviouristic approaches failed to take account of the fact that human behaviour cannot be understood without reference to the actors' subjective meanings and that this fact was much better accounted for by cognitivist psychological approaches. For the purposes of this research, however, I needed to translate this understanding to a sociological perspective.

secondly, I must situate myself as the participants are situated (be 'in their shoes'); and thirdly, I must access the (subjective) perspective of participants. I will now discuss each of these by relating them to the theoretical perspective just presented.

The first, observation, is indicated for two reasons: to understand social interactions (which are context for meaning-making) and to understand broader contextual factors that contribute to meaning, such as those which are specific to the setting. Silverman (2003) pointed out that meaning is not only discernable in what people *say*, but also in what they *do,* necessitating analysis not just of how people "see things", but also of how people "do things" (p.359). The second implication for methodology – that I must put myself in the place of the participants - is suggested by the fact that my particular location within the context affects meaning-making, so that being located as similarly as possible to a participant's situation positions me to understand the (contextual) factors influencing meaning-making for that participant. Goffman (1989) explains how this works:

> Subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation or their ethnic situation, or whatever (Goffman, 1989, p.125)

This strategy is a central concept in symbolic interactionism - "the putting of oneself in the place of the other" (Crotty, 1998, p.75).   The third implication of the theoretical perspective adopted in this research is that it is necessary to access the subjective meanings of participants[36] - to "get inside their heads", as it were. Understanding social action depends on understanding "how the situation looks to the actors in it", which necessitates finding out "what they think is going on" (Becker, 1998, p.37). I will now consider how these methodological imperatives are incorporated into the design of this research.

Design Perspective: Ethnography

An *ethnographic design* informed the choice of methods for investigating this study's research question. Ethnography - a methodology often adopted by symbolic interactionists

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[36] In talking about "subjective meanings", I am including the whole range of "mental states" (Bechtel, 1988) including "intention, cognition, affect, belief, evaluation, and anything else that could be encompassed by what is broadly termed the "participant's perspective" (Maxwell, 1992, p.288).

(Crotty, 1998) - has been defined as "the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities" (Silverman, 2006, p.67).

The Appropriateness of an Ethnographic Design

As a methodology, ethnography addresses the three methodological imperatives presented above; that is, firstly, to observe social action in context; secondly, to be "in their shoes"; and thirdly, to obtain the perspective of participants. Consistent with the first of these, an ethnographic methodology places observation to the forefront, as suggested by Spradley's definition of ethnography as "the work of describing a culture" (1979, p.3). In keeping with the second methodological imperative, ethnography involves understanding another way of life "from the native point of view" (Spradley, 1980, p.3); while the third requirement is satisfied by ethnography's description of the culture and lifestyle of a group "in a way that is as faithful as possible to the way they see it themselves" (McNeill, 1990, p.64).

Site and Participant Selection

An aspect of research design is the selection of research site and of research participants[37]. Using "purposive sampling", the Langley Ex-Services and Community Club[38] was selected because it illustrated features and processes of interest in this study (Silverman, 2006). Site selection was tied directly to the aims of this research. In order to learn about the nature, meaning and role of registered club participation, it was best to study it *in situ*. As a site, the Langley Club[39] has services, such as bingo, which I expected to provide convenient access to high concentrations of older club-goers. Further, in taking into account the "generalization goals" of the study (Flick, 2004), I chose a site which was as far as possible typical of registered clubs – the Langley Club had the usual poker machines, food and drink facilities, sub-clubs and so on. Finally, in choosing the Langley Club, I took into account the "temporal, personal and material resources" available to me (Flick, 2004, p.146) and chose a club within a conveniently located area.

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[37] Flick (2002) suggests that selection takes place in three levels of a qualitative research project: during data collection (case selection), interpretation (selection of material and selection within material), and during the presentation of results (which results to include and in what order and so on) (Merkins, 2004).

[38] The name of the club is a pseudonym.

[39] Although the club's full title is "The Langley Ex-Services and Community Club", it is sometimes known by the shorter "The Langley Club".

Sampling of participants was on the basis of age[40]. For the participant observational component, selection was based on my assessment of suitability, while selection for in-depth interviews made use of more formal procedures. Selection of participants to be the subject of (participant) observation was based largely on attributed age, although other characteristics, such as gender, were sometimes used for selection. Inclusion into the category "older" was done intuitively (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 1991) or automatically (Richeson & Shelton, 2006) as it was usually not possible to determine chronological age in the field[41].

Selection for in-depth interviews was by theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990); the choice of interviewee was dependent on the purpose of the interview at that point in the research process, and not on external criteria (Morse, 1994). The first interviewee was theoretically sampled on the basis of issues which arose during the preceding period of fieldwork. However, I had earlier developed an initial sampling frame (Bernard, 1988), since this was required by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Appendix A). As the research progressed, it became clear that this was not an adequate basis for sampling.

Sampling was broadly consistent with Grounded Theory Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) - perhaps the most widely used interpretive analytic technique in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Donovan & Sanders, 2005). The first interviewee was selected using a type of open sampling, in order to purposefully obtain data relating to categories of interest (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A dominant theme had emerged from analysis of the previous twelve months of participant observation data - the relationship between club-use and later life loss. The first interviewee, Mary[42], was chosen to shed light on this relationship. Mary was relatively old (aged 89), widowed, mobility-impaired and was very involved in club activities. Subsequent analysis of Mary's interview (and of on-going fieldwork data) suggested further areas requiring exploration.

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[40] I did not set a particular cut-off age for this study. A fixed boundary between "older" and other club-goers was likely to be of little interpretative value (Ginn & Arber, 1995), since the significance of "age" in social life is culturally variable, and hence context-dependent (Jerrome, 1992; Hazan, 1994). Furthermore, chronological age is not useful as an explanatory variable insofar as it is "not possible to make any inference about differences in behaviour from differences in age" (Harris, 1983, p.15).

[41] Selection was presumably based on a range of factors including the potential participant's hair and facial morphology (Richeson & Shelton, 2006), clothing style (Twigg, 2007), speech characteristics (Coupland, Nussbaum & Grossman, 1993; Boden & Bielby, 1986; Ramig, 1986) and actions, such as bodily movement.

[42] All names are pseudonyms. See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Mary (p.299).

Using relational and variation sampling to maximise opportunities for finding variations (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), I sought interviewees whose experience was very different from Mary's. I selected Maurie[43], who differed from Mary in age (aged 67), club-use (he did not play bingo) and in being male.   Interview recruitment continued using this basic theoretical sampling strategy, looking for "negative cases" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collection ceased partly because of time constraints, but this time coincided with reaching "theoretical saturation"– that is, little additional data were being found which led to the development of new themes or categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Methods Used in this Study

This research's ethnographic design was implemented by use of particular methods, that is, "techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis" (Crotty, 1998, p.3).   The main methods used were participant observation and in-depth interviewing (for data collection), qualitative data analysis techniques (for analysis), and - for presenting the research - an ethnographic report[44].

Data Collection Methods

The main data collection methods employed in this research were *participant observation, in-depth interviewing*[45] and *document collection*.   Data collection took place over a four and a half year period, from June 1998 to December 2002, during which time I attended the club several times a week, tapering off visits as in-depth interviews became more the focus of data collection.

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[43] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Maurie (p.301).

[44] This is using "ethnography" to refer to a text type. "Ethnography" has also been used in this thesis to refer to this study's design - a distinction made by Crotty (1998).

[45] Both participant observation and in-depth interviewing use *interviewing* as a technique (Fontana & Frey, 2003); however, there is a distinction between the "informal interviewing" of participant observation and the "formal interviewing" of in-depth interviews (Spradley, 1980). In practice, in-depth interviewing was marked off from participant observation interviews by the obtaining of written consent, recording of the interview, the fact that it generally took place at an agreed time, and was the result of a "specific request" to hold the interview (Spradley, 1980, p.124)

Participant Observation

Participant observation is the main method used in studies with an ethnographic design (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) as well as being a key method of choice for symbolic interactionist research (Spradley, 1980). Participant observation is a

> … method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study… observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time (Becker & Geer, 1957, p.28).

This definition of participant observation draws attention to its connection with ethnographic design, as well as to the role of direct observation, participant's perspective and immersion in context. I will describe the implementation of participant observation.

Most field trips were during the daytime, but I occasionally visited in the evenings. I limited visits to approximately two hours so that the task of writing up fieldnotes - which was done later on that day could be done within the same day. I regularly attended bingo which was held twice a week, and I spent time in other areas of the club, particularly the Lounge (the biggest area of the club which is described in more detail in the next chapter), where I played poker machines or passed the time seated at a table. Observation involved attending to what was occurring around me - that is, to what could be seen, heard, smelt, felt and even tasted. I observed spaces at the club and how these spaces were organised (Jorgensen, 1989); I observed the people, particularly the older people, who occupied these spaces - their characteristics, their activities and their interactions; I paid attention to my own experience, behaviours and the effect the latter had on those around me. While observing in these ways I interacted with other club-goers. I will first describe participant observation of bingo, then of other activities and areas within the club.

Preparation was necessary for club visits and included choosing appropriate clothing (Bailey, 2007). I chose a style of dress which was typical for a younger female club-goer attending the club during the day - casual, inexpensive and unremarkable in style, such as

might be purchased at a discount department store[46]. I usually arrived around one hour before the start of a bingo game and spent time in another area of the club, before taking a place at one of the bingo tables. Like many players, sometimes I was seated up to one hour before bingo was due to start. I sat at different tables on different occasions, in order to get to know, in time, most if not all the regular bingo players. I talked with players before bingo started, during the breaks which lasted a few minutes between games, during the half-way half-hour long break (which we called "interval") and when bingo was finished. I talked to the bingo caller, Adam, and the bingo hostess, Sharon. I engaged in normal interaction, not particularly distinguishing myself as a researcher, although I always explained my research when I met someone for the first time, while also giving reminders on occasions. Sometimes my research topic was specifically addressed, but generally it was not. The frequency and regularity of interaction at bingo produced an abundance of data. The stability of the bingo-playing membership over time ensured that I had data on patterns of interaction and behaviour over time, as well as on other temporal processes.

When not playing bingo, my main participant observation situation was in the Lounge. I spent time in the Lounge before and after bingo, during "interval", and on other days when bingo was not played. I participated by playing the poker machines, walking around and watching, and by sitting in the table area, perhaps reading or watching the screens. Observations of poker machines focused on older people - the circumstances of their arrival and departure, who they were accompanied by, how they played (for example, moving around machines, betting amounts, length of time played); and their interactions with others such as staff, apparent strangers, acquaintances, family and friends.

Participant observation in the Lounge was more difficult than for bingo. From a personal perspective, poker machine playing – necessary for participation - was expensive and I was often exposed to a great deal of cigarette smoke. Methodologically, a significant impediment to data collection was the difficulty in engaging players in conversation, although this was easier with players whom I knew from bingo. Although such casual interaction certainly took place, sustained social interaction did not, making it difficult to

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[46] The appropriateness of my dress was highlighted on one occasion when I had mistakenly dressed in a more professional style. On that field visit, prior to bingo, I was approached by an older club-goer who appeared poised to ask me a question as though I was a staff member, but who turned away at the last moment, perhaps seeing that I did not wear a staff badge. On this occasion, several other club-goers (to whom I was well known) either assumed I had finished my research, or that I at least would not be attending bingo on that occasion. These unusual responses to me could not be explained by any differences other than the inappropriateness of my dress for passing as a young female bingo-player.

get in-depth information from club-goers. I was able to compensate for this, however, by arranging in-depth interviews with some players. Further, the relative infrequency and lack of a pattern of social interaction in the Lounge made participant observation sessions rather tedious, with much less useful data collected in the same amount of time as it was at bingo.

In addition to bingo and the Lounge as sites for participant observation, I observed other areas of the club, including the foyer (*the Atrium*), as well as food and drink service areas (*the Brasserie* and *the Café*). I observed the club's function rooms and areas adjacent to them, as well as outdoor areas, such as the street in front of the club, the outdoor food service areas *(the Terrace)* and the carpark. Some areas within the club were less accessible to me, as a female, such as *the Sports Bar*. I observed also the flow of people between areas. I participated in activities additional to the activities of bingo and poker machine playing, such as attending annual general meetings (AGMs), and post-AGM suppers. One such supper included deep-fried finger food, and another, a "gourmet chocolate tasting". I participated in one-off events including *Health Week* which included a poorly-attended talk on arthritis; and I visited during special events including a concert by a well-known children's musical group.

In-Depth Interviewing

In addition to participant observation, I used in-depth interviewing (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995) as a data collection method. This enabled participants' perspectives to be explored in greater depth than was possible during the informal interviews of participant observation. I conducted ten in-depth interviews with club-goers ranging in age between 63 and 89, eight women and two men. Four interviewees were known to me from bingo, two others were each introduced by one of these, although they were known to me by sight from bingo. Four other interviewees were selected from amongst older people in the Lounge or Atrium. Two bingo players (one male and one female) whom I knew well, refused to be interviewed, and did not give a reason. One man, unknown to me, whom I approached in the Atrium also refused an interview. One interview was cut short when the interviewee, Myra [47], concluded the interview with "I'm going to go in and spend a few bob next door", referring to the poker machines. To obtain interviews with unknown participants, I used an introduction like this:

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[47] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Myra (p.302).

Hi. I'm Virginia from the University of Sydney, and I am doing a study on older people's use of registered clubs and I was wondering if you would be interested in participating in an interview?"

All consenting participants were asked if they wanted to be interviewed at the club - at that time or later - or in their home at a time of their choosing. Four interviewees arranged home interviews, and six chose immediate club-based interviews. Home-based interviews were relaxed and friendly – a mood which may have been facilitated by my bringing a cake from the local cake shop. A comparison of club-based and home-based interviews appears to show no systematic differences attributable to interview location – other than that club-based interviews were more likely to be affected by background noise, and to be interrupted by passing club-goers and club-staff.

To guide the interview, I used an interview schedule, rather than a set of specific questions, which gave me "freedom of movement" in eliciting information (Wolff, 2004). The topics in the schedule can be grouped into those relating to participants' club-use, and those that relate to life outside the club. Of the former, the interview guide covered how the member became involved in the club; their typical day at the club; their relationships with other club-goers; and what club-going means to them. Of the latter, the interview guide covered their typical week (use of time, activities and so on), and their relationships with non-club based friends and family. The interview guide also reminded me to obtain certain demographic information, such as age, living arrangements, marital status, health, socioeconomic status and other biographical details. As the interview was a "conversation" - albeit with a "specific purpose" (Minichiello et al., 1995, p.61) - other topics arose naturally. The success of the interview depended, in part, on my success in creating rapport so that the interviewee would be willing to talk openly; and I found that sharing personal information about myself seemed to increase self-disclosure. Interviewees were often willing to discuss very personal information (Pickard, 1995) while there were occasions when a "sense of rare intimacy" was achieved (Bytheway, 1987). After each interview – usually after transcription - I reflected on my role so that I could improve my interview skills.

Collection of Documents

Document collection was employed as an additional method. Gathering "cultural artifacts" (Spradley, 1980), or "mute evidence" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), helped to build an ethnographic picture of the research setting. Documents collected included the Langley

Club's newsletter and website, and advertisements and articles from local newspapers. An information pack, provided to me when I joined the club, included the club's Regulations and other documents. During visits to the club, I picked up a range of materials available to members and visitors, including brochures and fliers about policies, promotions and so on. Another useful document was the club industry magazine, *Club Life*, which was published by the RCA (NSW). Initially, I found *Club Life* on a table at the club, but I was later provided it, free of charge, by the RCA (NSW).   The only document I collected from a club member was a recipe for Spanish Cream given to me by Mary.

Data Recording and Preparation

This section describes how the (collected) data were recorded and processed into a form useable by analysis procedures. The raw data of participant observation were the rough notes in my fieldwork notebook, as well as the notes jotted on my bingo book; the raw data of the in-depth interviews were audio recordings. In these forms, the data were not easily accessible for analysis, and hence required some further processing. The raw field notes were amended and typed up on the computer while the audio recordings were transcribed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These processes operated as an early step in the data analysis process, and formed a "bridge between observation and analysis" (Spradley, 1980, p.33). I will now describe these processes in greater detail, considering participant observation data first, followed by in-depth interview data then collected documents.

During participant observation at bingo, I took quick notes on my bingo book, and more extensive notes in my notebook. After the first few bingo sessions, I discovered that I was able to jot down important quotes and observations on the facing page of my bingo book (see Figure 2 on p.77).

Figure 2: Example of fieldnote recording during bingo

Although I did this quite openly, the practice did not seem to draw much interest. Despite this, I was careful never to note down anything that might cause me any embarrassment or which might violate the rights of participants. More extensive notes were made in a notebook during bingo breaks when I visited the restroom. On one occasion I left the bingo table to do this during an actual bingo game - rather than during the break. On my return I found that some of my table-mates were very concerned for me as I had missed

several games; others seemed more disapproving of my violation of an unwritten rule that players participate in all games (by arriving on time and staying throughout).

Note-taking in my notebook was generally done covertly. On one occasion, however, I trialed taking notes openly. I spoke with Merv during the bingo break, and as I took notes (with his permission) Merv seemed to be distracted, appearing to be trying to work out which of his comments I was writing down and which I left out, and was shaping his talk with the aim of making it more likely to be recorded by me. Further, note-taking may have called forth a stereotype of an "interview" in Merv which he tried to impose on me as well as himself; at one point, when he had finished telling me something, Merv said: "Now, you ask me a question". This suggested to me that taking notes during conversation might have been interfering unnecessarily with the collection of naturally-occurring data, and I returned to my previous, less intrusive, methods. Note-taking was also used for collecting participant observation data in situations other than bingo. In the Lounge, I often took notes while sitting at a table or at a poker machine. When I was concerned about the obtrusiveness of this, I delayed note-taking until I was alone.

The raw fieldnotes record the data in the chronological order in which they were collected, and were comprised of important phrases and descriptions of action, the times of my arrival and leaving, the location of action, the actors, parts of overheard conversations and parts of conversations between myself and others, as well as some early thoughts on interpretation. Data from bingo sessions additionally included accounts of which players sat with which other players as well as of participants' actions and interactions (such as, for example, their strategies for increasing luck).   Raw data recorded on my bingo book were generally transcriptions of short comments made by fellow bingo-players, capturing their words verbatim. Raw fieldnotes served as "useful reminders to create the expanded account" (Spradley, 1980, p.70), which was generally typed up on the day that participant observation took place. These processed fieldnotes differed from the raw fieldnotes in that recalled - but unrecorded - information was added, and although chronological order was maintained, headings were added to indicate the setting or activity. These notes used a convention to distinguish between verbatim quotes and recalled approximations.

In-depth interview data were tape recorded and then transcribed to be available for data analysis. The collection of interview data involved recording the interview using a tape recorder, and taking additional notes in my notebook. All interviews were recorded - with the interviewee's written consent - whether the interview took place at the club or in the

participant's home. My cassette tape recorder was set up prominently on a table between myself and the interviewee, and was switched on as soon as possible after permission was granted. Most interviewees paid little attention to the tape recorder, although one asked me to switch it off when she told me sensitive information about a family member. Audio-recordings were supplemented by notes which supplied additional information about interaction which occurred either before or after the recording period, and about aspects of the interview which would not be picked up by the audio-recording, such as the appearance of the interviewee and their home (for home-based interviews), and any events which occurred around us which affected the interview 'context of situation' (Halliday, 1994). An example of this from a club-based interview included the approach of a child dressed as a dinosaur which prompted the interviewee, Myra, to say "Now I've seen everything" – a comment which would have made little sense in the audio-recording without this additional information. Other non-audible features of the interview were absent from the audio-recordings, including paralinguistic features, such as gesture and facial expression (Halliday, 1985). I made no attempt to systematically record these features.

For in-depth interview data, the audible text remains the "primary document" (Moerman, 1990), but it is processed into a transcription to be available for analysis. I transcribed the tape recordings of the interviews[48] by listening to them on a Dictaphone machine which enabled me to easily slow down or rewind the tape to check the accuracy of my transcription. I typed every word I heard, and vocal sounds such as "ums" and "ahs". Very small sections of some interviews were left out because I could not understand what was being said. In spoken language, a great deal of information about meaning is conveyed by intonation, pauses and other phonological features (Hawkins, 1984), and for this reason, I used transcription conventions to represent these features of speech.

For collected documents and other artefacts, data were processed by being copied into a format usable by data analysis procedures. This generally involved transcribing part, or all, of the document into a computer text file. Throughout the data collection phase of the research, the raw data of participant observation, in-depth interviewing and document collecting were processed to provide input into the data analysis process and it is to this that I will now turn.

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[48] Doing the transcription myself, as opposed to using a transcription service, was an effective way to begin interpreting the data. As an exponent of *Conversational Analysis*, Schegloff, puts it: "there is no better way of coming to hear what actually was said and done than listening closely and repeatedly, under the discipline of committing to paper what you hear" (Schegloff, 2000).

Data Analysis Procedures

A number of data analysis procedures were employed in the interpretation of the collected data –the fieldnotes, transcripts and documents[49]. These procedures included *thematic analysis* and *Key-Word-in-Context analysis (KWIC)*, while *narrative analysis* was used with interview data, specifically[50]. Ethnographic methodology is associated with particular data analysis methods which are qualitative in nature. Qualitative data analysis has been described as:

> the nonnumerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the
> purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships
> (Babbie, 2007, p.378)

Procedures for analysis are required which maintain the qualitative nature of data (which are in the form of *words*), since it is these which are the vehicles of meaning in ethnography.

Coding of the Data and Initial Analysis Procedures

Data analysis began with the application of codes to the qualitative data[51]. Coding, "the heart and soul" of qualitative data analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), involved "classifying or categorizing individual pieces of data – coupled with some kind of retrieval system" (Babbie, 2007, p.384). Coding involved "breaking up" multiple pages of text so that the segments of text could be grouped together for use in later analysis (Bailey, 2007). Codes - "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.56) - were assigned to text which could be characterised as having a particular meaning relevant to

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[49] In parallel with the data analysis procedures described here, I had a system for managing the data (Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006). Based on a system proposed by Glaser (1978) and Strauss & Corbin (1990), I created groups of "memos" to organise thinking, reading and writing about theoretical, methodological and language topics.

[50] Interpretation has occurred in this research, not only as a result of the specific procedures described here, but also as a result of a number of less intentional processes. The interpretation was shaped by, for example, what I chose (consciously or otherwise) to attend to, since what I "saw" and "heard" were filtered by my assumptions, prejudices, and so on (Denzin, 1989). In addition, despite attempting to record as faithfully as possible settings, actions and interactions, my fieldnotes "necessarily reflect and convey [my] understanding" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p.35). Finally, aspects of my self, such as gender, age and social class, are likely to have affected interpretation at all stages of the research process (Silverman, 2006).

[51] I began coding after my first field trip. Initially, coding involved embedding codes in the fieldnote computer text file. I soon found that this system lacked flexibility, and I obtained the qualitative data analysis software, QSR NVivo. I used this to attach "nodes" to data, which corresponded to the application of codes.

"the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.56).   Different sized units were coded - such as the sentence, a "turn" [52], a "narrative" and so on - depending on the type of analysis being applied.

An initial coarse-grained content analysis was performed on each transcript, during which a descriptive code was applied to the main idea in a turn (Wardhaugh, 1992). At this stage of the analysis, I made no attempt to further examine the content of those turn-level text segments, nor to compare them across interviews.   This analysis revealed patterns including which of us raised which topics, and how often topics occurred.   In this way, I was able to obtain an initial sense of the interviewee's broad areas of concern, and derive useful feedback on my interview technique.

This turn-level content analysis, along with participant observation data, fed into a single-case analysis for each in-depth interview subject.   This single-case analysis covered areas including the participant's life history, current circumstances, club use, pathway to club involvement, reasons given for club-going and opinions of - and attitudes to - the club.   In addition, the single-case analysis included any factual information provided about the club. Creating these single-case analyses helped to minimise the risk of de-contextualising the data, and was available for use by other data analysis processes which synthesised data from multiple interviews.

Thematic Analysis Procedures

The central data analysis procedure used was "thematic analysis" (eg. Morse & Field, 1995) which was based largely on Grounded Theory Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).   Its purpose was to identify "themes"; that is, "expressions that attempt to capture the essence of a whole range of similar or related problems and categories that emerged through analysis" (Lyons & Dionigi, 2007, p.381).   Such expressions have also been called "categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).   These "themes" are indexed by the "codes" already described.   Data analysis occurred in three broad stages. In the first stage, codes were applied to the data to begin to identify themes – a type of "open coding" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which involves the breaking down of data into segments and the comparison of these segments for similarities and differences.   Segments which are "conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning" were grouped together by

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[52] Stenstrom (1994, p.34) has defined a "turn" as "everything A says before B takes over, and vice versa" (Simpson, 2005, p.345)

the one code (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.102).   Analysis at this stage laid a foundation of description and categorisation to be built upon in later stages (Lofland et al., 2006).   After initially attempting to "code up" inductively from the data (Fielding, 2001), I found that I had produced a massive "catalogue" of codes rather than something which would permit the emergence of relationships between codes.   After consulting a number of texts on qualitative data analysis methods (such as Glaser, 1978, Spradley, 1979, Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Dey, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994 and Strauss, 1987) I re-configured the coding scheme to create a list of codes which was effectively a "start list" (Miles & Huberman, 1994)[53].   Finally, I found myself adding new coding categories, such as methodological categories (setting up the interview, data recording issues around rapport, and so on).   After this reconfiguration, the number of codes was reduced, duplication removed, and analytic possibilities began to emerge.   Themes identified at this stage - such as the significance of later life loss in club-going, and the marginalisation of older club-goers both at the club in the wider community - tended to persist throughout the data analysis.

In the second data analysis stage - after the first few in-depth interviews and many participant observation sessions - descriptive analysis began to give way to a more interpretive analysis, as I began applying codes of a higher level of abstraction[54]. This resulted in data which were "conceptually ordered" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), that is, organised into "discrete categories…according to their properties or dimensions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.19).   These categories included a model of pathways to club participation and accounts of the role of the club in everyday life, the nature of the social interaction at the club and of the club's personal significance for club-goers.   Although the analysis was of a higher degree of conceptual development than previously, themes were

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[53] The "start list" was based on the following sources: the outdated coding system which it was replacing; a review of the literature; the research's framework (including a "list of research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.58); linguistic constructs (such as particular phrases like "of course", interesting juxtapositions and so on). In addition, some codes were based specifically on this particular setting, such as codes for some club-goers, staff and areas of the club.   Some pre-existing coding schemes proved useful at this stage, although they required modification to suit this particular situation.   These included some developed by Glaser (1978), such as "strategies" (where "someone is doing or saying something in response to a phenomenon" (p.105), "the six Cs" (causes; contexts; contingencies; consequences; covariances; conditions (p.74), and "mainline codes", such as "social control" ("keeping people in line"), recruitment ("getting people in"), "social interaction" ("people acting with people") (p.77)

[54] Segments were therefore coded with codes of both a descriptive and inferential nature – two levels which are both necessary for analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.65). This analysis stage corresponds with "axial coding" of Grounded Theory Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

still not fully connected "to form an integrated theoretical scheme" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.20-21);   I continued to analyse the data to build a more coherent conceptual understanding of the research[55], which formed the third and final stage of data analysis. During this stage, I began to use the concept of "social capital" as an organising principle for interpretation[56].

Related, but additional, to the basic thematic analysis just described, was a more rigorous variation of the "constant comparison technique" (Lofland et al., 2006 p.216) used to model the process of increasing club involvement. This method has been described as "analytic induction" (Flick, 2002; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Early data analysis suggested a typical trajectory to club participation which I provisionally modelled, and tested through theoretical sampling and data analysis to "identify problems and make appropriate revisions" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p.280). The process continued with revisions being further tested against new data in order to "support, reject, or modify them as the analysis continues" (Bailey, 2007, p.177).

Context-sensitive Data Analysis Procedures

Two other qualitative data analysis procedures were used which were more sensitive to context than thematic analysis: narrative analysis and Key-Words in Context (KWiC) analysis. A potential shortcoming of thematic analysis is that, to enable comparison of data associated with different cases, coding and retrieval procedures remove data from their wider context, and in so doing tend to fragment and decontextualise the data (Riessman, 1997). The use of data analysis methods which are more sensitive to context compensated,

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[55] Spradley (1980) observed that "the last major task in the research cycle occurs toward the end of a research project. … Writing an ethnography forces the investigator into a new and more intensive kind of analysis" (Spradley, 1980, p.34). This phase of data analysis coincided with the final major draft of this thesis.

[56] The application of an organising principle in this way may be at odds with Grounded Theory Method, which sees this last stage of data analysis as continuing to build theory from the ground up with the end point being "grounded formal theory" (Spradley, 1980, p.95-96). Using an organising framework, as I did, requires the application of an "external model" - as opposed to an "internal model" - which involves using "concepts and explanations that are found helpful for some purpose or other by the investigator, irrespective of whether such ideas are found among the people concerned, or whether they would even make sense at all to those people" (Hann, 2000, p.36). I am confident that the use of this "external model" in no way forced the data, since the data analysis procedures described here ensured an unbroken link with the data to create (what I hope is) a "set of well-developed categories … that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework." (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.22).

to an extent, for this shortcoming. One such technique is narrative analysis[57]. Riessman (1993) observes that:

> Respondents (if not interrupted with standardized questions) will hold the floor for lengthy turns and sometimes organize replies into stories [with recognisable] sequential and structural features. [Traditional methods] often fracture these texts … by taking bits and pieces, snippets of a response edited out of context (Riessman, 1993, p.3).

By taking parts of a response out of context, "crucial meanings" may be lost (Riessman, 1997, p.157).

The narrative analysis procedure used in this study involved identifying and analysing narratives which occur in the interview situation. Using an understanding of the structure of narratives developed by Labov & Waletzky, (1997 [1967]), I identified text in the transcription which appeared to be stories, and coded for narrative elements, such as *orientation*, *resolution* and *evaluation.* I then analysed selected narratives in greater depth, using procedures described by Mishler, (1986), Riessman (1993) and Cortazzi (1993). By identifying certain processes in the narratives, additional analytical possibilities were found. For example, an "unresolved" narrative (that is one that lacks the narrative element of a "resolution"), usually reflected an unresolved situation, or unresolved feelings about a situation.

Another data analysis technique used was KWIC analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003 p.269). This technique was used specifically to clarify the meaning of two "key" terms used by club-goers: "club" and "friend". As did narrative analysis, this procedure foregrounds the role of linguistic context in meaning creation. The procedure involved finding all instances of the key terms (as well as words which might stand for them) and analysing them in their linguistic context to determine their meaning. Once I had determined the different senses of these terms, I grouped these senses into clusters according to how closely related those senses were. For example, I found that "club" had distinct people and place meanings, as well as a higher order meaning, and "friend" had three main clusters of senses, *contact, reciprocity* and *intimacy.* Interpretation in this study was not restricted to the data analysis

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[57] I was motivated to use narrative analysis when analysing the transcript of Tom, who was a skilful story-teller, and I knew that using thematic analysis may render invisible this important feature of his character and of the interview interaction.

process, however, as it continued in the choice of methods for representing the research in the final report, and I will now discuss this.

Presentation/Representation of the Research

This section describes how the research was presented, or represented, in this account – that is, in this thesis. The way that research is presented is just as important as its content (Van Maanen, 1988; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Analytic choices made at the writing-up stage of the research influence the meaning which is available to the reader and I will now consider aspects of the presentation of this research which impact the effectiveness of this report in conveying my understanding of the research phenomenon.

I chose to present the research as an "ethnography" – a form of presenting research which describes a cultural scene "intact" (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972), and covers a breadth of domains including shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, as well as behaviors (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982b). Meaning, for the reader, depends on context, and for this reason, information about context is supplied as much as possible in this report. This includes providing information about the context of older people's club participation, that is, about the club itself (Chapter Four). A further aspect of context that I try to preserve is the linguistic context in which meaning is created. This is achieved by, for example, presenting verbatim quotes. I, as a participant in the research, also act as context, so I am present in this report – in the use of the first person, and by showing awareness of the development of my understanding. Finally, this report's structural form was chosen for its ability to convey meaning. I chose to present it in a traditional thesis format, the structure of which suited my representational purposes. Early chapters (including a review of the literature, and a description of the research site) show the context of the phenomenon and of my research project. This chapter, in describing the research's methodology, helps the reader to understand the basis for the interpretive decisions made. After findings are presented (with minimal interpretation), the Discussion chapter once again considers context, but this time the context for the findings themselves. A final issue for discussion in this section on methods is the ethical conduct of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Through the life of the research – from the design stage through to the writing of this thesis - I have tried to act in accordance with ethical principles, such as those laid out by

NH&MRC (2007).   These principles include respect for participants, integrity in the conduct of the research, fairness and beneficence –the desire to act for the good of the participants (Rogers, 2007).   In practice these values involved obtaining consent and minimising the risk of harm (NH&MRC, 2007).   I will now describe the application of these ethical principles in the design and implementation stages of this study.

Ethical Considerations at the Design Stage

Ethical considerations came into play in the design stage of the research, and involved a research plan which reflected respect for participants, minimised harm and enabled informed consent.   The design of the research reflected respect for the older people who are its focus; in choosing a qualitative, rather than a quantitative, design I aimed to minimise power imbalances (Denzin, 1989) which may result from using methods which take away the voices of participants – a potential failing of, for example, survey design. Furthermore, as I valued the perspectives of older people who have more life experience than I have, and from whom I could learn, I chose a design which minimised "studying down" (Wadsworth, 1997).

Minimising harm was also considered in the design phase.   Harm has been defined as:

> that which adversely affects the interests or welfare of an individual or a
> group. Harm includes physical harm, anxiety, pain, psychological
> disturbance, devaluation of personal worth and social disadvantage
> (NH&MRC, 2007, p.100).

Although such outcomes seemed unlikely from participating in research intended to understand the nature, meaning and role of club use, I planned to take the usual precautions which are described below. Informed consent was also planned for in the research design. The requirement for consent stems from respecting participants' capacity to make their own decisions (NH&MRC, 2007). It was necessary, therefore, to obtain (in writing) the consent of participants. The notion of consent entails that participation is voluntary – that is, "free of coercion and pressure" (NH&MRC, 2007, p.103) - and this, too, was part of the research's design.

This study's ethical safeguards were assessed by the University of Sydney's HREC. Initially the HREC was not satisfied that the study's design provided adequate protection from harm, since it considered the purposive sampling method to be potentially "coercive" (Appendix B).   I addressed these concerns by providing more details about the study's

interview sampling rationale, which resulted in HREC's approving the research (Appendix C).   I will now turn from ethical issues considered at the design stage, to ethical precautions taken during the subsequent implementation phases of the research.

Ethical considerations in the conduct of the research

At the stages of data collection, analysis and representation, informed consent was obtained and steps taken to minimise harm.   Consent to voluntary participation was obtained from club management and from individual participants, and was "informed" – that is, based on an adequate understanding of the research and the implications of participation in it (NH&MRC, 2007).   Informed consent was given by Langley Club management for the research.   During an informal conversation at an AGM held before fieldwork began, I sought the consent of the Langley Club's President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) which was granted verbally.   I then formalised my request in a letter (Appendix D) explaining the expected nature of my involvement (that it would be of a type typical of members generally), that informed consent would be obtained from individual participants, that in-depth interviews would be of a general conversational nature (and hence unlikely to cause harm). Some time later, during a follow-up phone call to the CEO, I was told that the club's Board had refused permission for the research.   I arranged a meeting with the President and CEO, which I attended with my supervisor and we explained in detail the nature of the research, the proposed outcomes, possible benefits to the club (such as to better meet the needs of their older members) and that the club's anonymity would be preserved.   Management were satisfied, and we subsequently received approval in writing (Appendix E).   No restrictions were placed on my club use, nor was I granted unusual access.

Informed consent to voluntary participation was also obtained from individual participants wherever practicable. The strategies for obtaining consent differed for the two main data collection methods, participant observation and in-depth interviewing. Informing subjects of my research was not always possible in the context of participant observation. While doing the fieldwork, I tried to identify myself to potential informants as soon as possible after meeting and inform them (verbally) about the research.   Observation which did not include verbal interaction provided no opportunity for explaining the research.   In the Lounge, for example, it was sometimes difficult to engage players in verbal interaction, particularly if they were playing the poker machines.   I believe that these (unwitting) research participants were not placed at any risk of harm, however.   As the observed

behaviour - in taking place in an ostensibly public place – was not of a private nature, it was unlikely that their privacy was invaded. In the event that reporting some aspect of the observed behaviour might result in some harm, participants were nonetheless protected by anonymity.

Informed consent for in-depth interviews was more straightforward, and involved giving interviewees written information and obtaining their consent in writing.   Prospective interviewees were approached during participant observation and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. If they expressed interest, I provided them (verbally) with further details. If they continued to be interested, I gave them the Subject Information Statement (Appendix F), which included a description of the objectives and nature of the research; details of my (and my supervisor's) role and the time commitment asked of them. It was made clear that participation was voluntary – they could refuse or withdraw at any time, without penalty. The Statement also sought permission for the audio-recording of the interview and informed them that they could ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time. Information was also provided about the means by which their personal information would be kept confidential. Finally, it offered the opportunity for the interviewee to discuss any concerns with my supervisor or a representative of the University's HREC. Written consent was then obtained by the participant's signing of the Consent Form (Appendix G), after being given time to read it. When signed, this form indicated that the participant was consenting to participation, and were given a copy to keep.

In the process of conducting this research, steps were taken to minimise harm to participants, and some of these steps were considered in the earlier description of the study's design. One way in which participants – both the club and individuals - were protected from the possibility of harm, was by ensuring their anonymity (NH&MRC, 2007). This was done by providing them with fictional names, and by keeping data secure and accessible to only myself and my supervisor. The club and participants were assured that they would not be identifiable in any publication arising from the research. In order to de-identify the club, I created a pseudonym, "Langley", for the suburb of the club's location, and changed the names of spaces within the club. I also made minor alterations to descriptions of the club's history, layout and activity schedule. The anonymity of individuals was protected by giving them pseudonyms and removing, or altering, identifying biographical details from this thesis. Interview tapes and transcripts were kept securely in a locked filing cabinet, and the computer files associated with the project were stored under password access on my personal computer and were accessible to only myself

and my supervisor. Having presented the study's methods and considered some of the ethical issues in their implementation, I will now address the research's quality.

Research Quality

This section presents information about procedures used to ensure the quality of this research. Before turning to this, however, I need to consider what constitutes good quality research, and how the reader might assess whether this has been achieved. Miles & Huberman (1994) assert that it is a "fact" that some accounts of research phenomena are "better" than other accounts (p.277), a view shared by Maxwell (1992):

> All qualitative researchers agree that not all possible accounts of some individual, situation, phenomenon, activity, text, institution, or program are equally useful, credible, or legitimate. Furthermore, the ways in which researchers make these discriminations do not pertain entirely to the internal coherence, elegance, or plausibility of the account itself, but often refer to the relationship between the account and something external to it – that is, the phenomena that the account is about. (Maxwell, 1992, p.283).

Despite this, there is no consensus on the nature of the "relationship between the account and [the phenomena] external to it". My perspective on this relationship has been described in an earlier section of this chapter as being one of "critical realism". This position enables me to posit the existence of "external" phenomena that an account can be "about", although their meaning is not inherent in them, nor is it available interpretation-free. The implication of this for evaluating research quality is that, in fact, one account may represent a phenomenon better than another. This is summed up by Miles & Huberman:

> qualitative studies take place in a real social world, and … there is a reasonable view of "what happened" in any particular situation (including what was believed, interpreted, etc.); and that we who render accounts of it can do so well or poorly (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.277).

The extent to which an account renders "what happened" well or poorly is the extent to which that account is *valid*.

To judge the validity of accounts, we assess the "adequacy of the evidence offered in support of them" (Hammersley, 1992, p.69). The type of evidence that supports the validity of an account is different for different types of phenomena, however, regardless of whether the phenomena are events, internal states (perspectives) of participants, or our interpretations, theories or explanations. A unitary concept of validity is therefore not appropriate, and I will use a typology of validities proposed by Maxwell (1992). This typology describes three types of validity: "descriptive validity" which refers to "the factual accuracy of the account as reported by the qualitative researcher" (Johnson, 1997, p.284); "interpretive validity", which depends upon "the degree that the participants' viewpoints, thoughts, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood and reported by the qualitative researcher" (Johnson, 1997, p.285); and "theoretical validity" which is related to "the degree that a theory or theoretical explanation developed from a research study fits the data" (Johnson, 1997, p.286). I will discuss each of these types of validity and how my research has attempted to, firstly, ensure them, and, secondly, show the reader that this has been done.

Descriptive Validity

In this research, descriptive validity is applicable to accounts of two general types of phenomena: either particular *things* (such as objects, settings, people, and the properties of these), or *occurrences* (including events, behaviours and so on, and which occur in particular timeframes). For the former, description is reasonably straightforward[58] while for the latter, somewhat greater interpretation is required (albeit of a relatively low level in comparison with explanation). Despite this, in both situations, it is possible to create accounts which are, to a greater or less extent, accurate. I will now describe how I tried to maximise accuracy of description in this research.

An accurate descriptive account of phenomena depends on my being in the best position to obtain data on those phenomena – that is, being in the right place at the right time. My being located as participant observer positioned me (as far as possible) to obtain accurate data[59]. Validity of description depends, too, on careful data recording. During participant observation, I made fieldnotes as soon as reasonably possible after exiting the field, and

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[58] Although perception and observation are, to an extent, "theory-laden" (Kuhn, 1962; Churchland, 1979)

[59] Descriptive data collected by in-depth interview, in comparison, will be one more step removed from the phenomenon being described.

tried to maintain a clear distinction between participants' perspectives and my own. I distinguished, for example, between text which was a direct quote and text which was a recalled approximation. For in-depth interview data, such questions as "Did he or she really make that statement, or did you mis-hear, mis-transcribe, or mis-remember his or her words?" (Maxwell, 1992, p.286) point to factors affecting descriptive validity. Recordings with clear audio were obtained by using a well-positioned, good quality cassette recorder in a location with minimal background noise. Descriptive validity is also threatened when meaning-conveying phonological features of speech are omitted from the transcription (Maxwell, 1992), so I adopted some transcription procedures intended to preserve such features.

Another strategy for maximising descriptive validity is "triangulation", which may improve descriptive validity by showing that different measures of a phenomenon arrive at the same result, "or, at least, do not contradict it" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.266). I used both "data triangulation" and "methodological triangulation" (Denzin, 1978, p.472). Triangulation of data involves collecting data from multiple sources, such as different times, situations and people, while using a single method (Johnson, 1997), and maximising the opportunity for uncovering negative cases (Denzin, 1978). Participant observation involved multiple observations over a long period of time, observing the same settings, and many of the same people[60]. I was able to see things which changed over time, and things which did not change.   I also observed multiple settings within the club, observing differences and similarities between them. Data triangulation benefits reliability as well as validity, as it becomes more likely with multiple observations that "anybody else using this method, or the same person using it at another time, would come up with the same results" (McNeill, 1990 p.14). Interview data in which there was agreement between interviewees about, for example, particular occurrences, was useful. Multiple perspectives on the same event rounded out my interpretation of that event, sometimes resolving apparent inconsistencies. When used in this way, interview data was a "resource" rather than "topic" (Garfinkel, 1967), the latter being how interview data were generally used within this research.

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[60] Data triangulation includes collecting data at different times (Johnson, 1997), and, although I did collect data from a range of times, I have less data about the evenings at the club, which has implications for descriptive validity of accounts of the club in the evening. For example, on a number of evenings I attended, the club was crowded with young people, but I could not be certain that this group of young people attended every evening of the week.

Triangulation of methods (largely participant observation and in-depth interviewing) was used in this study to maximise descriptive validity. Since different methods have different weaknesses and strengths (Johnson, 1997), one method may capture what another fails to capture. Although the positivist assumptions underlying the notion of "methodological triangulation" have been questioned (Blaikie, 1991; Massey, 1999), it is nevertheless reasonable to assume that different methods may capture different "components of a multidimensional construct, or different aspects of a complex situation" (Sim & Wright, 2000, p.138). In this research, the benefits for research quality of combining observation and interviews were substantial. I found that, for example, observational data often corroborated descriptions of events given to me in interviews. Conversely, there were occasions when an interviewee's account of his or her actions was at odds with my observations of those actions - a not uncommon occurrence in ethnography (McConway, 1994). Applying the logic of method triangulation suggests that using multiple methods improved the descriptive validity in these instances, since it determined more accurately the reality of the situation.

Interpretative Validity

A key element of ethnography is obtaining the perspective (thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and so on) of participants. Participants' perspectives were, of course, external to me, and, although such perspectives are interpretively created in interaction, it remains the case that there was, in fact, a particular perspective that was held by a participant at a particular time, and in that particular context and so on. The accounts of perspectives presented in this thesis, then, may be assessed - though not unproblematically - for "interpretive validity" which is :

> the degree to which the research participants' viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood by the qualitative researcher and portrayed in the research report (Johnson, 1997, p.285).

I have tried to provide convincing accounts of the older club-goers' perspectives (on, for example, the meaning of club participation) which are based largely on what participants *said* and what they *did,* as well as my understandings of the contextual factors that influence meaning production. During conversation (occurring during either participant observation or in-depth interviews) participants conveyed their perspectives to me in words.

The accuracy with which I captured their perspective was influenced by how effectively I provided an atmosphere which was conducive to "open and undistorted communication" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p.8). Observation, in addition to conversation, played a part in obtaining participant's perspectives, since it provided useful information on behaviour and context, from which perspectives may be inferred[61].

Returning for a moment to the notion of triangulation: in some instances, my understanding of participants' perspectives (and hence interpretive validity) was enhanced by the use of multiple interviews in which I was exposed to multiple perspectives. I will give an example: I was interested in Pauline's perspective on club-going in the context of her husband's death[62]. During informal and formal interviews with some of Pauline's friends, I heard what her friends believed to be Pauline's motivations for joining the club. When I interviewed Pauline, her perspective seemed quite different. It would seem, then, that Pauline's friends' accounts lacked interpretive validity - and so would have mine had I relied solely on theirs. However, the situation may not be as simple as that; there were many indications – available in the interview context and the wider context of Pauline's club involvement - to support Pauline's friends' assessments of her motives for club-going. Similarly, there are many reasons why Pauline herself might (perhaps unconsciously) reject such attributions, since they suggested, for example, that she might be "lonely". What is clear is that there are times when even obtaining the "participant's perspective" is problematic for assessing interpretive validity[63].

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[61] I will provide an example: when, one morning, I observed a man pacing rapidly back and forth across the Atrium, while every now and then trying the locked door to the Lounge, it is reasonable to - at least tentatively - conclude that he was very much looking forward to playing the poker machines.

[62] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Pauline (p.304).

[63] This brings into question, therefore, the value of "member checking", a type of triangulation in its own right (Holloway, 1997), which is often recommended as a strategy for checking the accuracy of an account of participant's perspective. Member checking is "the process of testing hypotheses, data, preliminary categories, and interpretations with members of the stakeholding group from whom the original constructions were collected" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.238-239), and is generally considered a good strategy for strengthening interpretive validity (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). I did not specifically employ member checking in this research, although in conversation and in-depth interviews I intentionally checked previously arrived at understandings. Similarly, during interviews, I would summarise what I thought was their position for them to comment on. Whether such a failure to systematically check interpretations with respondents is a threat to interpretive validity has been questioned by many qualitative researchers. Riessman (1993) points out that "human stories are not static, meanings of experiences shift as consciousness changes" (Riessman, 1993, p.66), while Gubrium & Holstein (1997) say that "biography is continually subject to reinterpretation" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p.157), in which case, participants may not recognise accounts as consistent with previously held interpretations. Furthermore, some interpretations of a higher analytic content may not be recognisable by participants (Todd, Nerlich, McKeown & Clarke, 2004, p.48).

Interpretive validity is also demonstrated by aspects of the research's presentation in this thesis. Throughout the report I have used, wherever possible, "low inference descriptors" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982a) which present observations in concrete terms, in order to minimise the interpretive distance between the data and interpretation. This is reflected in, for example, the presentation of verbatim accounts, rather than in reconstructions of the sense of the participant's perspective which may have allowed my personal perspective to creep in to the reporting (Seale, 1999).

Theoretical Validity

The final of Maxwell's validities to be considered is "theoretical validity". This research goes beyond description of events and perspectives and posits interpretations, explanations and even *theorises* about the data. Accounts that do this are accounts of a very different type from the descriptions and interpretations just discussed. The phenomena to which these accounts refer are not 'out there' in the same way. Despite this, some theoretical accounts are more "credible and defensible" than others and this can be assessed by "the degree that a theory or theoretical explanation developed from a research study fits the data" (Johnson, 1997, p.286), that is, the degree to which it has "theoretical validity".

It seems plausible to suggest that the best way to ensure that theory fits data is by *basing* the theory *on* the data. Theories that remain closer to the data are likely to have greater theoretical validity than more abstract theories which are "more removed from the raw data to which they pertain" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.23). As indicated earlier, analysis in this research broadly followed Grounded Theory Method, largely in order to ensure the theoretical validity of higher order interpretations, while, at the same time, conceptually ordering those interpretations using social capital as a framework. I have tried, furthermore, to develop interpretations which are "internally coherent" and in which concepts are "systematically related" - factors which are indicative of theoretical validity (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.279).

Theoretical validity depends, too, on the validity of description and interpretation. A theoretical account is unlikely to be valid when it is based on poor description or misunderstanding of the participants' perspectives. Good data collection procedures were, once again, necessary - as were other strategies, already discussed, which contributed to descriptive and interpretive validity. One relevant aspect of data collection is doing sufficient fieldwork to reduce the likelihood of the appearance of disconfirming instances –

necessary for developing a "more detailed and intricate" theoretical explanation (Johnson, 1997). Furthermore, I needed to provide sufficient information about theory-building processes for the reader to judge this study's theoretical validity. I have tried to do this by showing how data analysis proceeded, and by discussing alternative interpretations to my own (Silverman, 2006, p.271). I have also tried throughout the research to link my interpretation with the wider theoretical context.

Generalisability

It is usual to discuss the generalisability of findings in the same context as validity, since both depend, at least in part, on the research's design and implementation. It is often thought that findings are generalisable if sampling procedures have produced a "representative" sample.   However, it is necessary to maintain, analytically, a separation between the concepts of "representativeness of samples" and "generalizability of findings" (Gobo, 2004). Generalisability depends not on representativeness, but rather on the extent to which the account can be extended to other situations, that is, whether findings and interpretations in this research would be "useful in making sense of similar persons or situations" (Maxwell, 1992, p.293). The implications of this study for the club industry will be considered in Chapter Eight.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the main methodological considerations which guided the examination of older people's registered club participation. The research question about the nature, meaning and role of participation suggested an ethnographic design which was also consistent with my constructionist epistemology and critical realist ontology. Participant observation and in-depth interviewing, along with some document collection were the methods which underpinned this ethnographic account. Information was also presented on the steps taken to protect participants from harm and obtain their informed consent, as well as on the steps to maximise this in-depth study's descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity. The next chapter provides an ethnographic description of the Langley Ex-Services and Community Club.

CHAPTER 4: THE LANGLEY EX-SERVICES AND COMMUNITY CLUB

Introduction

This chapter provides background about the research site in order to contextualise the subsequent presentation of data relating to club-based social processes, and the role of the club in the everyday life of older club-goers. Spradley points out that "every social situation can be identified by three primary elements: *a place, actors,* and *activities*" (1980, p.39). The first section of this chapter provides background information about *place* - the Langley area and the Langley Club itself. The second section is about the *actors* – that is, the older users of the Langley Club. The third section – concerning *activities* - describes the social action and activities in which older Langley Club-goers are involved. I hope that this detailed description provides not only the necessary facts for the purpose of interpreting later data, but also enables the reader to get a 'feel' for what club participation is like, and to get a sense of who these people are.

Section I: The Langley Club

The Langley Ex-Services and Community Club has been operating in the Sydney suburb of Langley since its establishment in the early twentieth century by a group of ex-servicemen returning from WWI. This section will describe the historical and social context of the Langley Ex-Services and Community Club, before examining some changes to the club which impacted on older club-goers' experience of participation.

The Suburb of Langley

The Langley Ex-Services and Community Club is located in Langley's modest commercial area in the vicinity of Langley Railway Station. A few streets away in any direction, office and retail premises give way to the tree-lined streets of Langley's established residential

areas, characterised by Federation houses[64] and 'between-the-wars' bungalows, along with recently built single storey townhouses. Settlement in Langley[65] began in earnest with the opening of the railway line in the late 19th century and accelerated through the post-war period, reaching its peak during the 1960s. Proximity to the train line and desirable housing stock in picturesque streetscapes have ensured the suburb's continuing popularity and above-average property prices.

Residents of Langley are mostly of Anglo-Celtic origin. Recent migration into the area by people of north-east Asian origin, however, has resulted in approximately one-third of Langley residents speaking a language other than English at home (with the majority of those speaking a Chinese language). Residents of Langley enjoy slightly higher than average incomes, higher levels of educational attainment, higher status occupations and lower unemployment than the Australian population as a whole. This "relative advantage" (ABS, 2003b) is reflected in Langley's above average *SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage*, an index designed to measure the social and economic wellbeing of Australian communities.

Older people (aged over 65 years) account for around 14% of Langley's population, a similar percentage to NSW as a whole. Just under 10% of older Langley residents are in paid employment (mostly part-time), in largely professional and other white collar occupations. Like the majority of older Australians (Whiteford & Bond, 2000; ABS, 2000), older Langley residents generally have incomes well below that of the wider population, including Langley residents in other age groups. Nearly 70% of Langley residents aged between 65 and 74 live with their spouse, while nearly 20% live alone. For those aged over 75, fewer than half are living with a spouse, while nearly 40% are living by themselves. Widowhood presumably explains the difference between these figures.

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[64] Federation style houses were built predominantly in the years between Australian Federation (1901) and World War I (1914).

[65] This description of Langley and its people is drawn from a number of sources which I have not cited because it would identify the suburb. These sources include local government documents, local histories and ABS statistics.

The Development of the Langley Club

A Brief History of The Langley Club

Not long after the first soldiers began returning from WWI, a group of returned sailors and soldiers met in the Langley School of Arts and agreed to form *The Langley Returned Soldiers Club*[66].   The Club originally met in the dirt-floored basement of a local commercial establishment but, within a few years, membership growth necessitated a move to a larger venue, and in the early 1920s land was purchased to build the Memorial Hall. In the 1930s, the Returned Soldiers Club was accepted as a Sub-Branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia, now known as the RSL.

Around the time of the 1956 legalisation of poker machines in NSW registered clubs, the Langley RSL Sub-Branch was granted a licence to run a licensed club, and a new premises was built. An older club member recalls in a recent club newsletter:

> As the membership grew, about twelve of us got together and decided we needed a club house of our own. With the support of members, the Memorial Hall was constructed which remained until the new Club was built and opened a few years ago. It was a real feeling of achievement to see it come together. It was the sort of place where everyone spent their free time, and you'd never walk in without seeing a face you knew. If a newcomer visited, they weren't a stranger for long.

The endeavours of the Langley RSL Sub-Branch were, and continue to be, supported by the RSL Women's Auxiliary, made up largely of wives – many now widows - of RSL Sub-Branch members. The Women's Auxiliary had raised the funds needed to build the Memorial Hall, and, as one current Women's Auxiliary member recalls, each member was invited to join the new club to make up the numbers. Since then, the Women's Auxiliary has, every year, made breakfast for hundreds of marchers on Anzac Day[67], countless

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[66] This history of the Langley Club is based on sources including a history of the club published in the immediate post-war period, several local histories, the website of the Langley Club, histories of the RSL (Hills, c.1927; Sekuless & Rees, 1986; RSL, 2004) and some histories of gambling (Charlton, 1987; AIGR, 1999)

[67] 'Anzac Day' is the most significant day in the Australian ex-service community's calendar: "On 25 April every year, Australians commemorate ANZAC Day. It commemorates the landing of Australian and New Zealand troops at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. … Remembrance Ceremonies are held in many local communities, often at dawn, and centering around memorials, such as those associated with many ex-service-based registered clubs" (Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal, 2008a).

sandwiches for other RSL and ex-service events, and run raffles and stalls to raise funds for the RSL.

The club continues to reflect its ex-service roots – during the last renovation, meeting rooms, offices and a museum specifically for the use of the RSL Sub-Branch, were expanded and improved. A daily reminder of the ex-service nature of the club is experienced by club users when, at an appointed time in the evening, a small Remembrance service is held. The poker machines become inoperative, the lights are dimmed, and club patrons stand quietly while the Ode of Remembrance[68] is recited over the public address system. Club-users hear:

> They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old
>
> Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn
>
> At the going down of the sun and in the morning
>
> We will remember them.

To which patrons reply: "Lest we forget".

In the mid-1990s, the Langley Club was substantially rebuilt and has since undergone regular renovations. The latest renovations include the construction of a sizeable outdoor area to provide a space for patrons to smoke outdoors[69]. The Club continues to expand, including buying several investment properties in the local area.   I will now briefly consider the connection between the club and its ex-service establishing body as it pertains to the governance of the club.

Governance of the Langley Club

The relationship between the club and its establishing RSL Sub-Branch has been integral to the development of the Langley Club, and to this day, members of the Sub-Branch – who account for five percent of the club's membership - continue in key roles within the club management structure. The club is governed by a Board of Management which is elected by the membership at annual elections. Members of the Board are nominated from amongst the general membership. At the beginning of the research period, the club's

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[68] The "Ode of Remembrance" is an excerpt from Laurence Binyon's poem "For the Fallen", which was first published in The Times in September 1914. Ceremonies like this are held at many ex-service clubs in Australia.

[69] Smoking indoors was banned by legislation during the period of the fieldwork.

constitution required the majority of the Board to be Sub-Branch members. During the fieldwork period, this requirement was removed from the constitution at an Annual General Meeting (AGM), yet the Sub-Branch has maintained an effective majority: most Directors are either Sub-Branch or, in some other way, affiliated with the Sub-Branch[70].

There was wide variation amongst members in their willingness to become involved in the governance of the club[71]. All members are permitted to nominate for the Board, vote at elections and attend AGMs - and hence to influence club decision-making processes. Only a fraction of the membership, however, become involved in these ways. Of the thousands of club members, approximately one hundred attended the AGM each year. It was clear from Director's and members' comments that the vast majority of attendees were ex-service members. As a consequence, AGMs had an almost festive atmosphere, as members - many of whom have known each other for decades - reconnected with each other. At the same time, this group of members seemed to have a strong sense of ownership of the club – many referring to it as "our" or "my" club, and were consequently passionate about decisions which affected the club's direction. There seemed to be, at each AGM that I attended, an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the club's direction, and with management – paid and voluntary - whom they held responsible for it.

Changes Impacting on Older Club-goers

Over time changes have occurred at the club which have impacted on older members' club involvement. These include loosening of the relationship between the club and its ex-service membership, and the club's increasing commercial orientation.

The Loosening Connection between the Club and RSL Sub-Branch

Despite the continuing connection between the club and the ex-service community, there are signs that it is not as strong as it has been, and looks set to continue to weaken. The members of the Sub-Branch, and its associated Women's Auxiliary, are mostly older people who joined the club in the post WWII period. As a result, the founding members of the club are generally well past retirement age, or have died. Over time, the once close connection between the club and its establishing Sub-Branch has gradually loosened, and

[70] The Board's only female member belonged to the Women's Auxiliary.

[71] This information about membership's involvement in club governance is based on data collected at AGMs over several years, and the minutes recorded and distributed to attendees at a later date.

this is in evidence in a number of changes which I observed, or which were reported to me by older members and staff, or which were reported in the newsletter.

The data indicate that ex-service activities were not given the high priority they had been given in the past. Julia, a member of the Women's Auxiliary, told me that some founding members of the club were not invited to the opening ceremony for the recent major renovations[72], nor were the Women's Auxiliary, and explained this by saying that "they want to get rid of the people who started the Club". Merv said that the club used to host a dinner for 25 years of membership of the Sub-Branch, but "they've stopped that". I asked Merv what he thought of that and he said he thought it was "terrible" - continuing "in my opinion, they're now a big business instead of an RSL Club. But they're very good just the same". Previously subsidised ex-service dinners have become user-pays.

In addition, the visibility of ex-service concerns within the club has been reduced. Regular two-page entries in the club newsletter reporting on Sub-Branch activities (including a list of recently deceased members) were removed when the newsletter length was cut to reduce costs. Remembrance Day[73] came and went during the research period without recognition by the club. The Sub-Branch President's request that an Australian Flag, donated to the Sub-Branch by the Prime Minister, be permanently displayed at the Club was refused. One edition of the club's newsletter carried an article by the Langley Club's President - himself a member of the Sub-Branch - the sole purpose of which was to distance the club from the Sub-Branch.

Some founding members were frustrated by changes affecting their input into decision making. On one occasion, when the club's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) explained his reasons for a decision to the AGM, a Women's Auxiliary member said:

> I can appreciate that, but I just feel that, sometimes, a little bit of P.R.
> would go a long way…   we never seemed to be informed … about

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[72] It should be clear from the discussion about validity in the previous chapter, that I am not assuming that participants' talk about external events, intentions of others (such as management) and so on, is a straightforward representation of reality.

[73] "Originally called Armistice Day, this day commemorated the end of the hostilities for the Great War (World War I), the signing of the armistice, which occurred on 11 November 1918 - the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. Armistice Day was observed by the Allies as a way of remembering those who died, especially soldiers with 'no known grave'." (Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal, 2008b)

what's going on, what's going to happen, we *are* members here, and I
think we deserve a bit of enlightenment (fieldnote 46).

Increasing Commercial Orientation of Club Management

The reduction in ex-service dominance of the club reflects an "increasingly commercial orientation" occurring across the registered club industry (PC, 1999; Hing, 2000; IPART, 2007).   Such a change in focus is facilitated by an increasingly professionalised management resulting in a "greater adoption of commercial management practices" (Hing, 2000, p.35) by both paid and voluntary management.

Evidence of this at the Langley Club included the shift to an increasingly professionalised role for the Board. In the past, it was not uncommon for a registered club to be voluntarily managed by a "Secretary Manager", who was also the secretary of the Sub-Branch that auspiced the Club. Although such management practices changed some time ago as club growth necessitated greater management expertise, many club Boards maintained commonalities with the Boards of their establishing sub-branch. The Board of the Langley Club has moved gradually away from its former role to a more professional one, more closely allied to the club's paid management. At the beginning of the research period, Board members wore blazers of the same type worn by Sub-Branch members, but with the name of the club instead of the Sub-Branch on them. The Board and the professional management team appeared in separate photos in the club's newsletter. During the course of the fieldwork, Board members began to wear black suits of the type worn by the club's senior executives, and eventually appeared in the club newsletter in the same photograph as the senior management team.

This indicated not only an increasing professionalisation of management, but also the downgrading of the ex-service basis for the club, with implications for the largely older people associated with the ex-service community. As a result of dissatisfaction with these changes, some Sub-Branch members are no longer involved with the club.   Julia, a Women's Auxiliary member, told me that her 87 year old husband, a member of the Sub-Branch, continues to attend Sub-Branch meetings, but will not visit the club for any other purpose. When I ask her how the members of the Sub-Branch view the changes to the club, Julia replied: "You wanna ask my husband about that!"

A further indication of the weakening of the connection between the club and its ex-service heritage is the fact that voluntary work previously done by (ex-service) members has been taken over by the club. This occurred when the RSL Women's Auxiliary was no longer required to prepare the annual Breakfast for marchers that is held at the club each Anzac Day. This had been an onerous task, but one which gave the women great satisfaction. Although it is likely that the Breakfast was taken over by the club with the intention of lightening their load, the loss of this role has not been welcomed by many of the Women's Auxiliary members.   Peggy's[74] account of her involvement in the Anzac Day Breakfast at the nearby South Rowley Club provides insight into the personal value attached to this activity:

> There's only ten of us now. …… Couple have died, you know, and that.
> I wouldn't leave them in the lurch, you know. …we need every member,
> particularly around Anzac Day. Well, we raise money, we sell raffles at
> the club for about two weeks before, but the main work is the day before.
> We make all the food for the morning. …We get there at five o'clock in
> the morning and set every table up, …mainly sandwiches, … then the
> boys come over with, you know, the little club bus, or whatever, and take
> the trays over and put them all in the cool room. Then we bring them all
> out, early Anzac morning. … we're all a team, you know what I mean?
> …I don't mind at all - a little bit useful. (Peggy interview)

Now that they are not needed for this important job, some of the members of the Langley Women's Auxiliary with whom I spoke felt a sense of loss, as well as resentment towards management which had taken this important role away from them. Although the group has continued to meet regularly, many members have stopped coming - a fact which one member attributed to the lack of purposeful activity.

The Club's Changing Priorities

With increasing professionalisation has come an imperative to maximise the club's income. A change in focus in a number of areas may be related to this imperative. A younger - more lucrative - demographic is being targeted by club management, as are business users of the Club. The club's constantly changing design, and the services it offers, are intended

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[74] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Peggy (p.305).

to maximise the use of space. These factors generally impact disproportionately on older members, as I explain below.

Events for young people are regularly advertised in the club's newsletter, including weekly "parties" aimed at students from a nearby tertiary education institution. The newsletter seemed to be making a special effort to appeal to a younger clientele, with few images including older people. An older member, Cathy, said that she had heard that they are catering for the "under 35s".

Another of the Club's strategies to increase revenue, described to me by a senior executive, is to target local businesses to make use of the club. An older member, William, said that, as a result of this strategy, the club is now "what we in the RSL call a 'businessman's club'". As I was told by the CEO, management sees the club's location in a commercial area as one of its great strengths.   Business functions are frequently held in the function rooms and attendees make use of the other facilities, such as the bar and poker machines. Business functions appeared to be given higher priority than the activities of ordinary members.   Activities such as bingo and cards are often relocated at short notice to accommodate business clients, creating confusion for the largely older members affected. Business users are provided with high quality freshly-brewed coffee, while bingo players are provided with canned instant coffee. Some older members were dissatisfied with this focus on business users. Yvonne said "Its a convention centre, they're only catering for the ones with money", and her friend concluded that: "this place is driving senior citizens out". Eileen[75] expressed concern about the effects on older women in particular, given that it's the "lasses" who "keep the club going".

These revenue-increasing measures are operating against a backdrop of a cap on membership numbers, imposed by regulators. The CEO explains to an AGM: "With our club membership now at its limit, we have to consciously look for ways of improving our space utilisation". Such ways seemed to be intended to encourage existing users to attend the club more often, and to attract new members (to replace non-renewing members) who will also come frequently to the club.

The commercial imperatives just described have impacted disproportionately on older club users whose lack of socioeconomic resources makes them generally unattractive to

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[75] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Eileen (p.298)

management as a source of revenue. Services and activities which were appreciated by older members have been reduced or removed in recent years, and older club-goers often talked to me about this. I will now describe some of the effects of such changes on older Langley Club-goers.

Marginalisation of Older Club-goers

A recent change which significantly affected older club-goers was removal of the free shuttle bus from its daytime run, so that it is now operating only in the evenings. This has affected those attending the club during the day, many of whom are elderly, who now must use public transport or private car.

Changes to the layout of the club during recent major renovations removed spaces used by older people for some indoor sports, including indoor bowls. Mary attributes removal of indoor bowls to a 'money grab': "They seem to have cut a lot of things out. V: Why do you think that is? M: They're so mean. Yes, I think they're very mean. They're just grabbing everything." Other indoor sports enjoyed by older people were also affected by these changes. These and other changes appeared to have alienated a large number of older members: a senior executive reported that the club lost 2000 members at this time, and most of these were older people.

Some older members expressed concern about the possibility of future cuts to activities in which older club-goers participate. I was frequently told by bingo players - and non-bingo players - that the withdrawal of bingo was imminent. Mary told me: "And same as the old people, like, you know, they'd love to, they'd dearly love to do away with the bingo." I asked Mary what she thinks is the reason that management had not removed bingo, and she referred to the fact that the club is largely frequented by older people during the day: "Well, if they do that they're going to have nobody there, are they?" The irony of driving out the older people who are the mainstay of the club during the daytime was noted by Betty: "I think they're just getting too big for their britches here, not catering to the right people, the people who will keep the Club going"

As priorities have changed, both in terms of the dominance of the Club's founding ex-service members and the increasingly commercial nature of operations, older members, many of whom were founding members, have become increasingly marginalised within the Club. The fact that these changes have been overseen by Board members, the majority of

whom are themselves older people and members of the Sub-Branch, is noteworthy[76]. When I asked one club member about this, I was told that these Board members are "wearing two hats" (their club hat and their Sub-Branch hat), and that their club interests outweigh their Sub-Branch interests. It may also be fair to say that their club interests outweigh their interests as older people.

Section II: Older Members of the Langley Club

The first part of this section describes, by way of background, the procedures for gaining membership as well as the rights and responsibilities of members. Then I describe characteristics of older Langley Club users with regard to age, gender, class, marital status and ethnicity.

Langley Club Membership Procedures, Rights and Responsibilities

The Langley Club membership is in the tens of thousands. Like most registered clubs, membership is effectively open to anyone who fills in the application form and pays the nominal membership fee. Members may access the club by showing their membership card, avoiding the inconvenience of signing in as a guest or temporary member. The membership card can be used to register the member's presence in the club, making them eligible for competition prizes, free drinks while playing the poker machines and discounts at the club shop. Points accrue on the card during poker machine play and when the card is used to purchase food or drink. Another right of membership is making use of the club's courtesy bus.

Non-members may attend the club under certain circumstances, and this swells club user numbers significantly. Statistics published in the club newsletter indicate that temporary and guest members make up sixty percent of club-users. The procedures for non-members to access the club depend on whether the visitor lives outside or inside a five kilometre zone (OLGR (NSW), 2007a). The former may enter as a temporary member, while the latter – unless the guest of a member – must join on the spot or be denied entry.

All club-users are expected to adhere to a dress-code, which is described in a booklet given to members and on a sign near the front of the club. The code is enforced by a doorman

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[76] It is beyond the scope of this research to explore the operation and motivations of the club's Board, other than to note what was revealed to me in interaction with the general (older) membership.

who observes patrons as they enter the club. The club's website describes the code which states that, amongst other things, "Members and guests are required to maintain a high standard of personal appearance and personal hygiene", and warns that the consequence of dressing in a way that may be "offensive" to other members and guests is refusal of entry. In addition to adhering to the dress code, members must comply with the provisions of the Constitution and Regulations or face suspension or expulsion from the Club.

It can be seen from the above that being a member of the Langley Club involves the older person in a system of procedures and requirements for behaviour which are a function of its associational nature, and of the regulatory requirements for registered clubs. Certain expectations and opportunities for action and interaction are created by the system described, which influences the nature of club-goers' participation.

Characteristics of Older Langley Club-goers

According to statistics published in the club newsletter, around three-quarters of members are aged over 65 years, although when non-members are taken into account, the percentage of older users appeared somewhat lower[77]. Certain activities, such as bingo and cards, were popular with older members. The number of older people was greater during the daytime while, in Mary's words, "the young take over at night". Younger club users during the daytime included young women with babies in prams meeting for coffee, young families having Sunday lunch in the Brasserie, and families with very young children attending concerts by well-known children's entertainers.

Club statistics indicate that 55% of the membership are men and 45% are women which appeared to still hold when taking non-member users into account. The members of the Board were almost all male. In terms of cultural background, I observed a disproportionately large (relative to the Langley area) number of older club members from the United Kingdom, while Asian people were underrepresented amongst older club-goers[78].

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[77] Statistics on characteristics of non-members who use the club are not available, so I am making use of my observational data.

[78] In younger age groups, however, it seemed that, over the course of the fieldwork, the number of club-goers from Asian backgrounds grew steadily - a trend in many gambling venues (AIGR, 1999, p.200). The Langley Club recognised this group by, for instance, celebrating Chinese New Year, and a club newsletter advertisement read: "Kung Hei Fatt Choy: Celebrate Chinese New Year with a Traditional Chinese Dragon Parade on February 15 between pm and 8:30 pm".

Of the older people with whom I interacted (and whose marital status I knew), over one third were widowed, some during the fieldwork period and some up to thirty years or longer before. The remainder were married, and I did not meet anyone who indicated that they were divorced. The living arrangements of the older club-goers included private home ownership, private rental, public housing and retirement village living. Two interviewees were living with daughters and their families.

The socioeconomic status (SES) of older club-goers has emerged in this research as an important factor in understanding club participation. In the absence of club statistics relevant to the SES of members, I base my assessment on a number of factors observed in the data including existing or previous occupation; education level; income source; cultural and personal attributes. I have concluded that the older club-goers with whom I interacted were generally of lower SES than for the Langley area older people as a whole. All the interview subjects, and most others with whom I interacted, had been in skilled manual or clerical occupations throughout most of their adult lives, although two interviewees' husbands (now deceased) had been public servants. In terms of occupation, as "manual workers" and "routine non-manual workers" (Haralambos & Holborn, 1996, p.71), the older club-goers can be described as working class. Information on income and education of the older club-goers also pointed to their lower SES. Most were on a pension or part-pension, and of the ten interviewees, many had left school in their early teens and only one had had formal post-school education. Tastes and patterns of consumption (Bennett et al., 1999) were typically working class, and shared "norms, values and attitudes" (Haralambos & Holborn, 1996, p.71) also pointed to this class categorisation.

Although it is usual that management of community organisations is of a higher SES than the general membership, the club's Board was predominantly working class. With the exception of two white collar workers (an accountant and middle manager), current and previous Board members were mostly retired from skilled manual occupations, such as trades. Many had worked their way up into leadership-type positions within their workplace or industry.

Older Langley Club users are generally users of two or more clubs in a local (unofficial) network of clubs. Older members may use different clubs for different purposes. Merv told me, for example, that he played bingo at Langley because, compared with other local clubs, it was a smaller game which gave a better chance of winning. Many preferred the

meals at the nearby South Rowley Club to those at Langley. Events at another local club, such as a Widow's Club day trip, can noticeably deplete attendance at Langley bingo.

Section III: Activities and Social Action

This section begins with a brief account of the club as a physical setting. I describe the main areas where activities take place: the large entrance foyer known as 'the Atrium', 'the Lounge' where the poker machine section and an area of seating are located, and the several function rooms in which bingo and other activities are held. This is followed by a more detailed description of the main activities engaged in by older people, and the social action which accompanies them. These activities include poker machine playing, "passing time", playing bingo, eating meals, attending entertainment and attending ex-service and sub-club activities.

The Built Environment of the Club

This section discusses the club's built environment as a context for interaction. Bennett & Bennett (1970) observed that "all social interaction is affected by the physical container within which it occurs" (p.190). This suggests that it is necessary to provide a description of the club's built environment which will facilitate understanding of the social processes that are described in later sections.

The Langley Ex-Services and Community Club's premises is a two-storey concrete-rendered building, fronting one of Langley's main streets[79]. Broad concrete steps sweep to brass-handled glass front doors, opened by a doorman to welcome club-goers and to check their membership status. Beneath the club is a three storey carpark, accessible to members by swipe card and to others by negotiation with a gate-keeper. Although the main doors are unlocked at 9 am, the carpark opens early for people coming to the Health Club or Café which open at 7:30 am. Inside the front doors is the Club's capacious foyer, called The Atrium which, with its marble and Australian hardwood furniture, leather lounges and grand piano, creates an air of opulence, not unlike the foyer of a five-star hotel. Competition prizes are often displayed in the Atrium, such as a small car, gift-wrapped in gold ribbon. Middle-of-the-road instrumental music is piped over the public address

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[79] De-identifying changes of a minor nature have been made to the description of the club's layout and the names of spaces within the Club.

system. The Reception Desk is located in the Atrium, near the front doors. On the wall to one side of the Reception Desk is an Honour Board listing the Club's Past Presidents and Life Members - the names of those who are deceased are indexed with a gold cross, while on the wall to the other side of the Reception Desk is a brass plaque recounting the Langley Club's history.

Beyond the Atrium is the Club's most substantial space, the Lounge, which is divided into two sections. One is the gaming area which is taken up by banks of the club's 200 poker machines, each with its own stool. In this area can be found the Cashier's desk, where players can exchange notes for one dollar coins for the machines, and exchange one dollar coins from winnings for notes. On entering the Lounge, in the windowless half-light, the senses are assailed by glittering lights from the machines, walls and ceilings, and the sound of coins being sharply disgorged into poker machines' metal coin-trays, and the homely smell of beer, coffee and cigarette smoke. Adjacent to the Lounge's poker machine area is a section with tables to seat four, a bar, betting facilities (horse-racing and lotto-type games), and eight large television screens, usually displaying sports programs. Next to the Lounge is the smaller and more intimate Sports Bar which, like the Lounge, is open from ten am to three am, and contains seating and televisions screens, but no poker machines.

Another area accessed from the Atrium is the Brasserie - a smorgasbord-style bistro typical of many registered clubs, which is open for lunch and dinner, and serves roast dinners, steak, seafood, pasta dishes and so on. At one end of the Brasserie is a set of large glass doors which allows patrons to dine on the Terrace. Next to the Brasserie is the Café which serves tea and coffee, light meals, snacks and pastries. The Café has a more contemporary décor than the Brasserie and, like the Brasserie, has tables on the Terrace. The Health Club – a gym and fitness studio - is also located on the ground floor, and I observed it being used by young and middle-aged people, but not by many older people.

The second storey is accessed by lift or staircase from the Atrium. Here can be found a number of function rooms where meetings of sub-clubs, businesses and community groups are held, as well as weddings, dinners, school formals and other functions. The Board Room, offices of senior executive staff, RSL Sub-Branch office and RSL museum are also located on this floor.

Activities and Interactions of Older Members

Within this setting older club-goers engage in a variety of activities and interactions, including poker machine playing, "passing time", bingo, and other activities associated with sub-clubs and ex-service groupings. I will now describe these activities and some of the social processes which they involve.

'Pokie' Playing

Poker machine gaming has been, and continues to be, the mainstay of registered clubs, and it was the 1956 legalisation[80] of poker machines in NSW that precipitated the rapid growth in club facilities and services (PC, 1999). Clubs in other states gained permission to have poker machines largely during the 1990s, except in Western Australia, where poker machines are still not permitted. Clubs are allocated a "poker machine entitlement" by the state regulatory body (Parliament of New South Wales, 2001), and machines are required by law to return 85% as winnings (OLGR (NSW), 2007b). Taxation of profits from takings is a major source of revenue for some State governments.

The prevalence of poker machines in registered clubs is a double-edged sword, bringing both benefits and threats to older club-goers. Revenue from poker machines has enabled clubs to provide "excellent facilities and entertainment to working people at a reasonable price" (Charlton, 1987, p.248) and, in still accounting for 60% of club revenue, this remains the case today (PC, 1999). Poker machines are, however, a factor in problem gambling (PC, 1999; McMillen, 1999; Hing & Breen, 2001; Dickerson, Haw & Shepherd, 2003; Livingstone, 2005a; IPART, 2007). The financial and emotional impacts of problem gambling (particularly poker machine use) on gamblers, their families and the wider community are well documented (PC, 1999; Australian Government & State and Territory governments through the Ministerial Council on Gambling, 2006). Older people, however, are less likely to have gambling problems than younger age groups (ACNielson, 2007).

Although information about older club-goers' poker machine use is difficult to obtain[81], it seems that older people play the poker machines at rates lower than for other age groups

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[80] Before their legalisation, for the first half of the twentieth century, poker machines operated illegally in NSW clubs (Moffitt, 1974; Wilcox, 1983; Bongiorno, 1985).

[81] Statistics on poker machine gaming participation rates are not made available by the club industry. For example, a report (ACNielsen, 1999) provided to me by a club industry body had had this information removed.

(Prosser et al., 1997; Government of South Australia, 2006; ACNielson, 2007). I found that a significant number of older people at the Langley Club did not play the poker machines at all. Older people were the majority of players generally during the day at the Langley Club, but at lunchtime and in the evening, younger players were in the majority.

Poker machine playing is more common among those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Prosser, Hing, Breen & Weeks, 1996; Bennett et al., 1999; McMillen, Marshall, Ahmed & Wenzel, 2004), although I could not discern any significant difference between players and non-players which might support this[82]. Poker machines are played by roughly equal proportions of men and women (Bennett et al., 1999), which is consistent with my observations.

Social Interaction During Poker machine playing

I collected data about the extent to which poker machine playing involved social interaction. Data collection involved systematically observing poker machine players before, during and after sessions of poker machine playing to determine whether or not they had a companion at the club and whether or not they interacted with them (or anyone else) during poker machine play. To summarise the more detailed results presented below: although actual social playing (that is, sitting at the same or adjacent machines) was uncommon, social interaction with companions (or others) before, afterwards or while moving around the poker machine area, was very common[83]. A complete absence of social interaction seemed to be rare.

Table 1 (p.114) summarises the categories into which I am placing types of social interaction associated with poker-machine playing. The first row shows social interaction status during play.   The second row broadens the social possibilities by considering whether the player has a companion at the club - that is, whether the player comes to the club with a companion (such as a spouse or friend), or has a pre-arranged meeting with a

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[82] This is not surprising, given that club-goers are generally from lower SES groups than the general public in the first place.

[83] This appears to be at odds with a study of poker machine players from six large Sydney clubs, which found that the majority of people reported playing with others (either their spouse (33.3%) or friend (29.1%)) (Prosser et al., 1997, p.73). It is possible that the people who reported that they played with others in this study (ie the 33.3% or 29.1%) might not actually play *in the company* of that person, but may *attend the club* with that person. The questions used in the survey would not have distinguished between these two situations, as subjects were asked: "when you play poker machines, do you mostly play: alone, with spouse, with other family; with friends; with work colleagues, other?" (Prosser et al., 1997).

companion. In this, the unit of analysis is broadened to the whole visit, not just an instance of observed poker machine playing. The third row of the table overviews the type of social interaction which occurred under the conditions described in rows one and two. I have labelled each cell with a letter for later reference: (see next page)

	Types of Social Interaction						
Social interaction status during poker machine playing session	Solo playing				Social playing		
Whether or not at the club with a companion	No companion at club		Companion present at club		No companion at club	Companion present at club	
Interaction typifying this type of social interaction	(A) No social interaction at all during visit	(B) Social interaction, but away from actual machine	(C) Interaction with companion at times other than during play	(D) Casual interaction with others around the poker machines	(E) Playing with a person other than companion (no instances observed)	(F) Social interaction with companion - playing same or adjacent machines	(G) Social interaction with others, while in the presence of companion

Table 1: Types of social interaction observed during sessions of poker machine play

The discussion below, based on Table 1, is divided into two sections, according to the top row of the table. The first section considers different situations around apparent solo playing (that is, when interaction is not taking place during play) while the second section considers circumstances of apparent social playing (that is, when interaction takes place during actual play). Although the presentation of this data runs the risk of appearing rather dry, it is details (and not generalities) that are needed to understand the social nature (or otherwise) of poker machine playing.

Apparent Solo Playing

Some researchers have pointed to a lack of social interaction associated with poker machine playing (Caldwell, 1985a; Brown & Coventry, 1997; Department of Human Services, 2000) and my initial observations led me to the same conclusion, as indicated in this fieldnote extract:

> I found the Lounge much more depressing this afternoon than in the other morning during bingo… glazed-eyed pokie players and other gamblers that were the most depressing. There was not much communication happening, even between people who clearly knew each other - friends, even spouses. I should observe this further. (fieldnote 5)

This section describes the various social situations around instances of poker machine playing in which I observed the player to be playing alone. For these players, there are a sub-set (type A in Table 1) who appeared not to engage socially at all on a visit to the Club, while others engaged in a range of social interaction away from the machine (B, C and D). It is these latter groups which may be seen as being solitary, but who in fact are socially engaged. Now I will discuss these types of playing, labelled as A to D in the table. The first two types (A and B) are about people who do not have a companion at the club.

"A" type: Although at least some social interaction appears to be the norm, there were some players who seemed to avoid even the most casual interaction. I observed Michael who came to the club alone, played alone and interacted with no-one for the duration of his visit. He arrived before the Lounge opened and was one of the first players through the door, heading straight to a machine. As soon as he started playing, he put in a $50 note, and had another at the ready, played multiple lines and bet a lot of "credits". He played without expression and smoked heavily. Others I observed in this category sometimes appeared agitated.

Others who play alone and do not interact with others during club visits had a very different playing pattern. These people appeared to be toying with the machines, spending only trivial amount of money. Thea, whom I interviewed, shed some light on this situation[84]. This is how she described her poker machine playing:

> I come about once a week. Usually after visiting - visiting my mother …
> Have a nice cup of coffee, and … some lunch … and, um, that's about it.
> …I usually put five dollars in [the poker machines], if I'm here just to
> see -. sometimes I lose it, sometimes [laughs] I win it back … but it's
> not <u>major</u>. (Thea interview)

"B" type: This category of social interaction covers those who were also observed playing alone, have come to the club alone, but who engaged in casual interaction. Such interaction might be quite minimal, such as the exchange of a smile and greeting with a player recognised from another day. Others who are alone at the club have somewhat more interaction. It was not unusual for players to initiate casual conversation with me, as in the following example about a woman I called Mrs Gray in my fieldnotes, as we waited to enter the 'pokie'-area one morning:

> She came to the table in the foyer where I sat and laboriously pulled the
> heavy leather chair around to face the Lounge door. She was walking
> with some difficulty, but didn't have a stick. She sat down gingerly. At
> this point she said, either "Scuse my back" or something about her back
> to explain why she sat down with such difficulty. I thought it was the
> latter, but I wrote down the former. Even though her back was towards
> me, I made some comment about the Christmas decorations. She replied
> about the presents which we can donate to the Salvos. She keeps the
> conversation going with "Do you come here often?" I reply "No, how
> about you?" She tells me "Once a week". I tell her I am doing research
> on clubs, but the doors to the Lounge open and she's gone with a brief
> "oh, yes". (fieldnote 49)

Later I observe the same Mrs Grey exchanging a few words with a young Asian woman at the machine next to her.

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[84] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Thea (p.308).

Others described a greater degree of interaction. Myra describes this situation involving significant casual interaction:

> Ah, there's a husband and wife, you know, we're down there, they're here. I always go up and say hello. On Mother's Day, she came up and gave me a kiss [laughs]. They're they'd be around my age. But lovely people (Myra interview)

The next two types of social interaction of players observed playing alone (C and D) covers instances where players have companions at the club but play alone – once again potentially creating the impression that these people are alone at the Club. Players in these groups had come to the club with someone else (friend, family member such as a spouse), or meet them intentionally at the Club. These people interact at times *other than* when they are playing. I will talk about how they interact with their companion here and in the next section talk about interaction with others.

"C" type: This group were observed playing alone but had interaction with the companion at times other than during play. I had expected that players who attended the club with friends or family would be playing with them, either sharing a machine, or at adjacent machines. This was often the case, as we will see in the next section, but it was also often not the case. Social interaction with companions does occur, but before or after playing. At the time of the observation of solo playing, it was sometimes the case that the player's companion has already left the club or had not arrived. Taking the entire club visit as the unit of analysis indicates in these cases that the visit is social. This was the case for those playing alone before or after bingo. Had I not observed these players at bingo, I may have concluded that they were not socially involved. Phyllis, who minded up to three tables for her friends at bingo, was often playing poker machines alone. Players sometimes played alone before or after other activities such as a sub-club or sub-branch meeting or having morning tea or lunch with friends or family.

Other lone players who have come with (or intentionally meet) a companion at the club do not play with them because the companion is engaged in another activity. Peggy, for example, reports that she and her friend, Judy, visit another club together during Cash Bingo games. Peggy does not like cash bingo so plays the poker machines (alone) while Judy is playing bingo.

Sometimes companions both play the poker machines but go separate ways during sessions, with (almost always) some intermittent interaction.   My initial presumption that companions would play together failed to take into account that choice of machine is not based entirely on proximity to the companion's machine, but also on which machine is a "favourite", which is believed to be "paying" and so on.   It is unlikely that it is the same machine or adjacent machine to that of the companion.   An example of this type of play is Mr and Mrs Tate, who I observed playing separately, but who came together to eat, and who occasionally found themselves at adjacent machines.   I also observed a woman (referred to as Pink in my fieldnotes, after the colour of her dress), playing alone at the club.   After a time, she was approached by a man who touched her on the shoulder and they began to talk in an intimate and easy manner.   The man told Pink that he had been to the local supermarket and bought "milk and bread", and I concluded that they were spouses.   He left Pink at her machine and bought some morning tea which he brought back to the machine.   Pink and her companion ate together before he left to play elsewhere in the Lounge. At one point, Pink walked straight past her companion without acknowledging him.

Olive[85] sheds some more light on this type of play. Olive replies to my question "So you play the 'pokies' with Mary when she plays?" by saying:

> Oh yes, but sometimes I <u>leave</u> her, because I'll say to her: 'I'm not
> having <u>any</u> luck on this, Mary, I'm going to trial somewhere else', and
> last - After I saw you on Monday, I went and played the Keno (Olive
> interview)

 "D" type: Of course, those who were at the club with a companion may interact with people in addition to their companion. So this category and the former are not mutually exclusive.

Apparent Social Playing

Now I will turn to the second of the two major divisions in the table, which is the situation where the player is observed to be playing *with* someone else, either at the same machine or at adjacent machines (E to G)[86].   I did not observe any instances of social playing for

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[85] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Olive (p.303).

[86] Playing together involves more than just sitting side by side; it involves, at the very least, the perception on the part of both parties that they are together, and, more than likely, some actual social interaction.

people who came alone to the club (E in the table); that is, playing at the same or adjacent machines with someone when they did not have a companion at the club. In other words, people did not seem to meet up with casual interactants and continue to play together.

Types F and G cover instances of social playing with a companion.

 "F" type: Above, I presented data on club-goers who have companions at the club, but who are not playing with them. Now I will present data on players playing with their companions.

I will first discuss playing the same machine, followed by playing adjacent machines. In the first situation, I observed a range of examples. During one field trip, I observed three instances of older male-female couples playing the same machine, the woman sitting, and the man standing beside her. I observed the woman of one couple rubbing their machine on its side, immediately winning a sizable amount. Neither of the couple visibly reacted, except that the woman, as she removed the coins from the coin tray, told her husband "So I know where I'm at". This suggests that she was monitoring her spending. This is consistent with the observation of a staff member who told me that those who play in pairs are "Husbands and wives, usually. They keep an eye on each other". However, most of the players in pairs whom I observed appeared to be female friends.

I observed two older women who were alternately playing the poker machines and eating lunch. I recorded in my fieldnotes, taken while I observed them from an adjacent machine:

> She pressed reserve and sat down again with her friend to continue lunch.
> … Many people walked past and saw the machine reserved and moved
> on. Her friend then came up and started playing. She had three goes.
> The other joined her. They both stood there after moving the stool which
> was in the way, taking turns of three goes each. Their cigarette smoke
> was blowing directly in my face but I resisted leaving. The second
> woman eventually put in another $5 and they continued with their three
> goes each. Their absorption in the game was very deep. They discussed
> the outcomes of each spin, how near they got to having a winning
> combination and so on. Their luck was going well for a while then it
> started to turn. One said: "it takes it all away again" and the other
> replied: "that's the general idea". At one stage, one leant down to the
> picture of the tiger on the machine and gently touched first one eye and

then the other saying "C'mon, sweetheart!". This seemed to yield results
and they had another win. (fieldnote 21)

Players sometimes played at adjacent machines with a companion. Couples sometimes played adjacent machines, but this was usually on an intermittent basis, as they moved freely around the Lounge. I observed a number of mother-daughter dyads playing adjacent machines[87].

"G" type: A final observation to make about players who played with a companion is that they did not necessarily restrict social interaction to the companion alone. There was casual social interaction between people in addition to interaction with the companion. I observed, for example, two women playing together also interacting with a male-female couple at the next machine.

In the above presentation of data relating to the social nature of poker machine playing, it is not my intention to create the impression that such playing is essentially a highly social activity. However, any assessment of its social nature should not be based entirely on observations of, on the one hand, whether the person attends the club with others (as they may attend alone, but interact casually with others) or, on the other, whether interaction occurs during play (as they may interact with others before or after sessions of play, or intermittently as they move around the 'pokie' area).

These observations tend to vindicate the perceptions of players themselves that poker machine playing is a social activity (Dickerson, Fabre & Bayliss, 1986; Roy Morgan Research, 1997; Hing & Breen, 2001; Livingstone, 2005a). Given that "there has been little research conducted into patterns of gaming machine play" (Hing & Breen, 2001, p.52), and that few observational studies of poker machine playing in clubs have been undertaken (cf. Caldwell, 1972, Lynch, 1990), this account of social interaction during play is a useful contribution to our understanding of the social nature of poker machine playing, as it draws attention to the multi-faceted nature of social interaction in these

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[87] A corollary of playing together is that poker machines are sometimes minded by players for companions. Minding is also done by a player who needs to leave a machine temporarily to collect more change, go to the toilet, or simply to have a break away from a machine. Minding may also occur when players arrive and want to reserve their favourite machine while they do something else. The machines have a function which allows them to be minded electronically by pressing a button which displays a flashing "reserved" sign. Despite this, many players use other means to reserve their machines. I observed keys in the coinslot, a handkerchief, ashtray and a lemon, an upside down coin cup, and a shopping bag stuffed into the coin tray.

circumstances.   Before moving on to describe other important activities, I will briefly describe a variation of playing which creates additional social contexts.

'Pokie' Promotions and "Brunch Bonanza"

Each morning, and most afternoons and evenings, "pokie promotions" take place, doubling the number of pokie players in the Lounge compared with other times[88]. Sharon, the bingo hostess, told me that:

> [pokie promotions] are big business in all the clubs. They're all based around the 'pokies', of course. They're designed to keep you playing. Some people would play anyway and some would only play during the promotions.

Sharon's observation is supported by the Australian Institute for Gambling Research which says that the prizes and other promotions are intended "to encourage consumer loyalty and sustained levels of spending" (AIGR, 1999, p.206).

Although with different titles and themes, the basic idea behind these promotions was that members stood to gain something by playing the machines. At the Langley Club, the promotion host collected tickets from a device that indicated which members have their card in the card acceptor slot of their poker machine. A ticket was selected from amongst these about every five minutes, and the winner was invited to collect an item from a table of prizes.

One such promotion at the Langley Club is Brunch Bonanza, during which plays have the opportunity to win prizes by playing the poker machines. There is also the added incentive of the opportunity to purchase a freshly made morning tea using "Langley Dollars" which accrue during pokie-play and are stored on the member's membership card. In sessions of Brunch Bonanza that I observed, the session began with the promotion "host", Stuart, welcoming members to the Langley Club: "Good morning, family and friends, ladies and gentlemen…!". Stuart walked around between the banks of machines with a cordless microphone. On spotting some of the regulars, Stuart announced "They're all here! It's the who's who of the Langley Club!". He made pleasant one-way conversation, now and then breaking into a chorus of "New York, New York". Two hours after it had begun, at 12:30, Brunch Bonanza had ended. Brunch Bonanza finishes, as does all the promotions

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[88] Some of these practices may have changed as regulations governing these practices continue to evolve.

held at the club, with a "Langley Lucky Dip" draw. Stuart called three names of people with their cards in the card acceptors, and each was given a key to try to open the Langley Lucky Dip barrel, in order to win several hundreds of dollars. If the key failed to open the barrel, the Langley Lucky Dip jackpotted for the next promotion.

The availability of food during this promotion created social opportunities additional to those provided by poker machine playing alone. Couples and friends ate together, often at their machines. People casually interacted while they helped themselves to morning tea, and the atmosphere was one of intimacy and homelikeness on these occasions.

Passing Time

Another type of activity commonly observed at the club involved sitting at a table - alone or with a companion (often referred to by older male club-goers as a "mate"), in the Lounge or Sports Bar and having a drink (and possibly some food), reading the newspaper, doing a crossword, watching the television screens or using the betting facilities. In these situations, interaction sometimes occurred between people at different tables. Although these club-goers would sometimes play the 'pokies', this did not seem to be an important aspect of the activity. It has proven difficult to find a succinct, yet accurate, term to describe this activity. A similar problem was noted by Oldenburg (1999) who said, in reference to what he calls "third places":

> The object of our focus – the core settings of the informal public life –
> begs for a simple label. Common parlance offers few possibilities and
> none that combine brevity with objectivity and an appeal to common
> sense (Oldenburg, 1999, p.15)

The informal expression to "hang out" captures the meaning very well and has been defined as to "spend time in a certain location or with certain people" (Lexico Publishing Group, 2008). A similar phenomenon in an enclosed public space has been referred to as "passing time in public places" (MacLean et al., 1983, p.113). Although the club is not strictly speaking a public place, I will use this term, "passing time". I do not, however, wish to suggest that those engaging in this activity are necessarily attempting to "use up" time or to make it "pass" more quickly.

At the Langley Club, "passing time" was largely a male activity. Women and couples did not seem to use the table area of the Lounge in this way, but rather as a base for 'pokie' playing or for a drink before a meal. The Sports Bar was occasionally used by couples, but

almost never by women either alone or with other women. As with pubs, women often do not feel comfortable entering this almost exclusively male domain ([Dempsey, 1990d).

The activity of 'passing time' was described by Oxley (1978), who noted that in the registered clubs in two NSW country towns, "the major recreational activity is drinking and talking. Women and mixed groups drink and talk at the tables; men at the tables or the bar" (Oxley, 1978, p.109). Passing time at the club was noted by Zinn (2003) in a self-help book for older men adapting to later-life change:

> Go to any RSL club or pub at most times of the day and you will invariably find, scattered around the tables, a number of single older men who may sit for hours with a beer in front of them, not speaking to anyone and certainly not to each other. (Zinn, 2003, p.179).

Zinn's concern here is with a lack of social interaction. I observed a similar lack of interaction at times, but I also observed many instances of interaction. The following quote from interviewee, Tom[89], illustrates some aspects of the nature of "passing time". In reply to my question about what he likes about clubs, Tom responds light-heartedly:

> Oh well, it's not a bad place, plenty of seats … and sit down. Pelt the stern in a heap, …. little bones, the bones in a heap" (Tom interview)

thereby graphically describing the act of sitting which, in his case, is followed by a number of hours of "passing time".

Now I will describe three interaction situations in this "passing time" activity, focussing on men in particular: men who appear not to interact socially, men who are alone (but interacting) and men sitting together. I often observed men sitting alone in the table area of the Lounge. I wrote in my fieldnotes:

> The only occupants of tables (other than myself) were three men sitting alone. All three are older with a beer in front of them, occasionally, though not always watching one of the screens. One alternated watching the Keno screen with reading a tabloid newspaper. (fieldnote 5)

On another occasion, I observed:

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[89] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Tom (p.310)

> An old man sat down at the table next to me with a beer. He took a
> paperback out of a plastic shopping bag and started reading. He stayed
> there for a long time (fieldnote 22).

Men who sat alone did, however, often interact with staff (discussed in the next chapter).
Sometimes, as we have seen, a man may be sitting alone while his companion, usually a
spouse, is playing the poker machines. For example, I observed Merv placing bets on the
horse-racing and watching the races on the large screen while his wife, Lil, played the
poker machines.

Sometimes "passing time" is done in the company of other men at the same table. On one
occasion:

> I sat within earshot of two older men sharing a table each with a beer in
> front of them. Both were well dressed in long casual pants, casual short-
> sleeved shirts and black shoes and socks. They did not talk much, nor
> look anywhere in particular. After a while one man said to the other: "Do
> you know which machine pays?", nodding his head towards the 'pokies'
> behind him. The other guy didn't understand the question, saying
> "What?" The first one repeats "do you know which machine is the one
> that pays?". The other replies "I know which one paid yesterday".
> Again, the first repeats "Yes, but do you know which one is the one that
> pays". The other replies: "Well, its just the luck of the draw, I think".
> This whole conversation was very drawn out, as though neither was the
> least interested in having it. After this, the first man without consulting
> the other, gets up and buys two more beers. (fieldnote 33)

Men sharing tables also interacted with others at other tables. These two older men sharing
a table interacted with several others:

> I saw two young-old men with beers at the table next to mine, watching
> racing. A young couple come in and take seats between these two men
> and TV, one man calls out, pleasantly: "Scuse me, love", to the woman.
> She and partner bob down apologetically. The woman's partner makes
> some joking comment to the older man. Just then I notice a youngish
> woman sitting at the other table next to mine, clearly following the horses.
> She joins in: "Beautiful 'orse" she says to the two older men. The man

replies to her and to the couple: "If it's the Melbourne Cup, Russia won in – '46". There's much laughter. I'm conspicuous for not including myself. But what can I say about horse-racing? I'm obviously not following it, either. … One of the two older men got up to buy the next round of beers, and, as he neared his table on his return, turned his attention to another older man at a table adjacent to theirs, asking, after some pleasantries I didn't catch: "Which Club do you belong to?" He replied (inaudibly to me), but his gestures indicating different clubs around the place and the first man responded "You spread your allegiance, do you?" (fieldnote 39)

Interview data shed light on this type of male-male interaction. Tom and Maurie report that they are often joined by a friend, or by a number of friends, while they are passing time at the club. Such meetings are not pre-arranged but participants know when a friend is likely to be there. Tom told me that he might "possibly" meet a friend during the interview which took place at the club. I ask Tom:

> V: And tell me, <u>when</u> you meet, do you meet <u>friends up</u> here?
>
> T: yeah, oh yeah.
>
> V: Do you <u>arrange</u> it or does it just <u>happen</u>?
>
> T: I haven't got too many... I haven't got too many ...[90]. Well, they're <u>nice</u> people over there - at [name of retirement village]. …
>
> V: So <u>you</u> come up here on your own, but you might run into someone you can talk to?
>
> T: Possibly. Possibly.

Part way through this interview, Tom was approached by a friend whom he greets: "Hello, me friend, how you going?", to which his friend replies: "Alright". I leave them to have a beer together.

Playing Bingo

Another context for a great deal of social interaction is the game of Bingo, which is held a number of times a week at the club; these bingo sessions were a major focus of my

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[90] Tom's intonation suggests that he is about to say 'I haven't got too many *left'* rather than 'I haven't got too many *friends'*

fieldwork. Before describing the social processes at bingo, I will briefly present some background on the demographics of bingo players and the development of bingo in registered clubs.

Research on bingo in Australia and overseas has consistently found bingo to be played mainly by older working class women (Dixey & Talbot, 1982; Grant, 1994; Bennett et al., 1999; Roy Morgan Research, 1999; Fallon, 1999; Reitz, 2004; Maclure, Smith, Wood, LeBlanc, Li & Curraro, 2006; O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2007). At the Langley Club, the vast majority of the approximately eighty bingo-players were older people, around ninety percent of whom were women. The working class and (female) gendered nature of bingo may explain why bingo "has been rarely the subject of research" (AIGR, 1999, p.202).

Bingo at the Langley Club

A useful introduction to a description of Bingo at the Langley Club is to present an edited extract from my fieldnotes which describes my first game of bingo. This describes the actual procedures associated with bingo, as well as illustrating social processes. My experience of Bingo - particularly as I became involved for the first time – may well be similar to that of other new players.

Bingo is usually played in one of the first floor function rooms, but on this occasion it was being held in the table area of the Lounge – moved to accommodate a business user. The extract begins with an account of my waiting in the Atrium prior to Bingo commencing. At this stage, I am observing the social action which takes place where some players gather to wait. From my seated vantage point, I observe people having coffee in the Café together, heading to the Lounge to play the poker machines or sitting in the Atrium, alone or with other players:

> Peggy walked through the Atrium. She said to a maintenance worker coming out of the Sports Bar "Good morning, John". He said "good morning" back. She said "How are you?". Much conversation is directed towards determining where Bingo is being held. Although its location is displayed on a board which can be seen on entering the club, most players asked other players or, on occasion, club staff. At 9:55, Merv and Lil arrived. They approached Ann and chatted standing near her chair. Merv looked over to George and said "Gidday, George". George replied. Then Merv asked Ann: "Is Phyllis here?" I didn't hear her

reply. Phyllis minds seats for all these people and more[91]. Merv and Lil walked across the foyer to the stairs. Over his shoulder to Ann, Merv confirmed: "Blue bag." Presumably Ann was using her bag to mind a seat, and was offering it to them.

Closer to 10:30, I entered the Lounge, and walked around the table area in search of an empty table, but most were already occupied by one person, some tables had two, three or four people at them. I approached a woman at a table near the back of the room, Jenny.   I asked her if we could sit anywhere and she said yes and invited me to join her. I did. I told Jenny my business, and for the next twenty minutes, Jenny inducted me into bingo, explaining the rules and procedures [I didn't see Jenny very often on subsequent bingo visits]. During the twenty minutes before bingo started, I followed Jenny's instructions and went to the front to purchase various things from the bingo hostess, Sharon. As had Jenny, Sharon explained the rules to me and pointed out the table from which I could get a "bottomless cup" of tea or canned bulk instant coffee for one dollar. Sharon made me very welcome. She said the members didn't like bingo in this room because of the noise from the 'pokies' and people talking - some of the members have hearing problems. Sharon sold me a book of twenty bingo tickets or cards for $2. I also bought a "bingo marker" which is a plastic vial of coloured ink which is dabbed onto the printed number on the card when it is called out. Most bingo-players had these sitting in front of them on the table, but some were using thick felt tip pens. I went to the table to get a cup of tea. I noticed that very few players bought the bottomless cup of tea or coffee for $1 (and even fewer bought a drink at the bar).

I also observed at this time that some people took their seats and put a bingo marker on the table in front of their seat and then went off to do

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[91] As seating is not fixed, it is necessary to arrive early if a player wants to mind good seats. Phyllis, for example, arrives an hour and a half early to mind up to three tables. People can arrive late when they know their seat is minded.

other things[92], to talk to other people, to play the 'pokies', or go to the Café. Not all markers, however, minded places for owners who had left to do something else, but some had been placed by a minder for someone who had not yet arrived[93]. Although many bingo players, having arranged their seating, left their tables, I did not. I observed that quite a few read magazines which they probably had brought with them and some just chatted with their table-mates. About five minutes before the calling started, two other women joined our table. One of these women was Eileen, and I never got the name of the other woman. They didn't know each other, nor did they know Jenny. Within minutes, we all knew exactly where each of us lived (which was within a couple of blocks of each other), and the three older women had discovered mutual acquaintances, whom they discussed. Other personal information was also exchanged, but, to my surprise, our names were not[94]. This issue arose again when bingo was over. At this time, the procedure is to write your name on the back of the book and hand it back up, after which one book is drawn and the owner wins a prize. At our table each of us wrote our names and passed them to the women opposite me who indicated that she would take them up. I got the strong impression that we all averted our eyes in order to avoid seeing each others names. I was intrigued by the gap between the warmth of interaction and its anonymity. This seemed to support an hypothesis I had developed on the basis of my earlier literature review, that "clubs provide an opportunity for social contact without commitment"[95].

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[92] This is not unusual at bingo: "regular players typically arrive well in advance of the beginning of each bingo session. Usually their first task is to claim their space in the bingo hall by placing bingo daubers and other personal effects on the playing tables" (Maclure et al., 2006, p.172); and "many women, particularly the older ones, would arrive up to two hours before the game started, to eat, talk, knit, read or play cards with others" (Dixey & Talbot, 1982, p.165).

[93] "The "regulars" marked their seats with lunch tickets, walking canes, pastries or personal items. Individuals saved their own seats and the seats of all members of "the table."" (Salari et al., 2006, p.241).

[94] I have used the (fictional) names of various club-goers which I did not know at the time I wrote these fieldnotes, but which I learnt on subsequent visits.

[95] On my next visit, however, my table-mate introduced her friend to me by name, and asked my name so that she could introduce me to him. I concluded that my experience on the first occasion was an extreme case of a pattern of limiting, and limited, intimacy. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

Not long before the game started, Adam, the bingo caller arrived. Adam appeared to be aged in his thirties, and was wearing black pants and white shirt.

This is how the game of bingo worked. For each bingo card, all the numbers between 1 and 90 are distributed randomly across six tables of three rows and nine columns each (see Figure 2 on p.48). When Adam called out a number randomly generated by a machine, the players found and marked it on their card. When all the numbers (that is, a "full house") in any one of the six tables on the card had been marked off, the player could "go out", calling "Bingo!" "Yes!" "Right!" or "House!"[96]. The player would give the book to Sharon who read the numbers back to Adam for checking, after which the player could go to the table of prizes and choose one of the meat, fruit and vegetable, or grocery trays[97]. A variation is to play a part game before proceeding to the full-house. The part game is when players have to get some special combination of numbers, such as a "postcode" which is the last four digits on the bottom line. There are smaller prizes for the minor game, and bigger prizes for the full house.

"Eyes Down", Adam announces, which brings an instant hush to the room. I had not played bingo before, so I didn't know what to expect of playing the game. I did, however, imagine that it would be easy to play. I found that, on the contrary, it was very difficult at first, although it became easier with practice. Over the course of the first half of bingo, as I became more proficient at locating the numbers on my book, I developed a bit of a rhythm which became quite mesmerising after a while. In fact, I began to really enjoy the rhythmic motion of my arm moving across the page, gently dabbing the number, back off the page, back on again for the next number, etc. This mesmeric quality was enhanced by the rhythmic call of the numbers, "eighty-six, eight, six; twenty-two, both the twos". The short numbers are embellished to make them longer to fit the beat "legs eleven, one, one".

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[96] At the Langley Club, the chances of winning at least the part game, on any one day are one in three.

[97] The value of bingo prizes is capped at $30 per game (OLGR (NSW), 2006).

I was surprised at the contrast between the silence during the game (apart from Adam calling) and the buzz of conversation that began the moment "bingo" was called when conversation at the tables took off again, stopping abruptly as soon as Adam began again[98].

A half-hour break was held after half of the bingo book had been played and approximately 45 minutes had passed since bingo started. Most players left their tables, some rushing to the 'pokies', some to the toilets and a few to the bar. Some stayed in the room, but moved around to talk to people at other tables. At our table, none of us left, and we continued our conversation. Prompted by interest in my research, we talked about the strong attachment some people have to bingo and also the 'pokies', and also the fact that bingo and the 'pokies' are very different types of activities, so that some club-goers liked one and not the other, although some liked both. We talked about what it was like to win bingo, and the operation of luck – a frequent topic of conversation. The game recommenced and continued for another forty minutes. Discussion at our table continuing between the games. The game was getting easier now, but not really that easy. As it was, I was missing a few numbers in each game because I couldn't keep up. My table-mates assured me that my skill level would improve with practice.

Adam winds up the game by saying: "Go downstairs and give some money away", after which the lucky book prize was drawn. The players at my table left very quickly. (fieldnote 1)

The Social Nature of Bingo

The highly social nature of bingo is invariably remarked upon to bingo researchers who have observed, for example, an "atmosphere of female sociability and companionship" (Maclure et al., 2006, p.169). The gambling function of bingo is often overshadowed by its social function: "bingo and social gambling … are intensely social activities in which winning tends to be subordinate in importance to the experience of the game" (Bennett et al., 1999, p.113). In one study, two-thirds of bingo players gave social reasons for playing, while only eleven percent talked about the thrill or reward of winning (AIGR, 1999, p.203).

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[98] Such silence during games has been observed by other researchers: A "quieter and more intensive mood settles in when games are in play" (Maclure et al., 2006, p.169).

Overseas research has also identified its social role (Fallon, 1999; McNeilly & Burke, 2001; Reitz, 2004; O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004).

The social aspect of bingo was paramount in the minds of the bingo players at the Langley Club. I was told by a player, for instance, that it was "the social side" of bingo which she most enjoyed. Social motivations were behind many accounts of reasons for joining the club. Types of reason of this sort included: *conversation with friends; friendship; spending time with friends; meeting friends; company/companionship; nice, friendly staff; have a few beers (with or without others); pleasant, nice people; family-like; home-like* and *helpful staff.*

Players drew a distinction between gambling-related motivation and social motivation. When I asked a player: "Do you think winning's an important part of playing Bingo? , she replied; "Oh no no. Seeing your friends is the main thing". This was also illustrated by an exchange which took place when two players at our table had won meat-trays. Mary turned to her friend and said "It's our turn to win, now." Her friend replied "I don't care about winning" and Mary said "Neither do I".

Social motivations are not behind all instances of club-going, however. Jill, when I asked if she ever came to bingo for the social interaction, said emphatically that she did not, and that she had plenty of social contact elsewhere. She said "I'm meeting people all the time" and told me about her volunteering at a Church where she coordinates the altar flowers.

Social Processes at Bingo

An outcome of the social nature of Bingo is that many players, though not all, had a sense of 'we-feeling' (Keith, 1980). Some players showed a sense of belonging by referring to the group of bingo-players as "we". An even stronger connection than to the group of bingo players as a whole, was the connection to a "table". I will now describe some of the processes at bingo which facilitated these connections, beginning with the group of bingo players as a whole, and then considering the "table".

Bingo Players as a Cohesive Group

The social nature of bingo is such that there is a sense of belonging to the group of bingo-players as a whole, not just at the level of the table. The group is quite stable - approximately the same number of people attend each time, and most attend regularly. In fact, the group's makeup is so stable that when a group of half a dozen young people came to bingo, it was necessary to put up a temporary table to accommodate them. Interaction

occurred beyond the immediate table - between tables and within the bigger group generally. This is evidenced by the fact that players often knew who was sitting where and who was minding for whom, as indicated by this bingo player's offer of assistance to me:

> While wandering around, I met the grey-parka-ed woman on her way to the cashier, $20 note in hand, who asked politely if I had found a seat. I said that I had not, and did she have a spare at her table and she said 'no'. She pointed out a woman in a green pants-suit on the other side of the room, and said that she had free seats at her table. (fieldnote 2)

Further, players often knew the progress of games at other tables, the identity of winners at other tables and sometimes the number of wins at particular tables. On one occasion, for example, Jill at our table said, when a woman called out: "that's Jocelyn's voice – it's unmistakable".

Induction into Bingo

New players, including myself, were generally 'inducted' by other players and by staff, as I found during my first, and subsequent, visits. I observed this process for a new player who was inducted by Yvonne and Betty, who enlisted the assistance of the bingo caller, Adam:

> Yvonne, who was sitting two seats away from the new player explained the next game to her with obvious pride in her own knowledge. At one stage, Betty got up and said something to Adam. Adam then announced "We've got a couple of new people here today, so I'll explain everything - that's what I'm here for" (fieldnote 9)

Table Talk

The 'table' was the basic 'social unit' of bingo. Players talked about groups of people as a "table" – in fact, anthropomorphising the table so that it was capable of agency (it could give or take away luck, for example). Along the same lines, a bingo researcher observed that "some seniors talked about tables as if you could be friends or enemies with them" (Salari et al., 2006, p.241). The physical tables themselves encouraged interaction. Players sat facing each other, either at tables of four or, more often, at larger circular tables seating eight to ten. I was told by one player:

> I like a round table, you can talk to everybody. Some of the functions we
> go to, the tables are like this [indicating with her hands a rectangular
> shape] and you can only talk to the people next to you and across the
> table (comments from a bingo player recorded in fieldnote 33).

The processes of Bingo are structured in such a way that they facilitate social interaction. Interaction can take place before bingo starts, in bursts between games and afterwards. These opportunities were generally put to good use, and conversation took place at any available opportunity.

The data suggests that much conversation at bingo served the purpose of facilitating social connection. What may appear to be inconsequential talk may serve an important purpose in creating group cohesion: "in talk, community may emerge through anchors that unite and give life to it, providing a footing from which commonality flourishes" (Faircloth, 2002, p.581). An example of this is talk about *luck*. The following situation is a good illustration because it indicates how talk linked people at a table, across tables, and even across time:

> Towards the end of the break, William passes a particular table, and stops
> to say hello. He asks the people at the table if anyone there had had any
> luck.   He told them that he'd heard that if you sit on your hanky, you'll
> win. He said that he had done it last week and won, and also this week
> and won. He moves on. At our table, Ruby wonders aloud whether the
> hanky could be soiled or has to be folded neatly. Grace hunts around in
> her bag for a hanky and is disappointed not to find one, and wonders if a
> tissue would do instead. As George returns to our table after picking up
> Bernice's prize, Lilly, remembering William's strategy, jokes with him:
> "You should be sitting on yer hanky!", as George had not won a game
> today. George replies: "I was!" pointing to his seat upon which sat a
> slightly crumpled hanky. (fieldnote 15)

Other examples of the "phatic" (Malinowski, 1922) nature of luck talk were also observed. I observed, after Lilly had won a game, that Ruby reached over towards her, symbolically trying to take some of her luck from her. Lilly said, good-humouredly, "No use plucking at me, I haven't got any luck!". The operation of luck is likely to have been the largest topic of general conversation. I will return to it in a later chapter.

The Spatial Reflects the Social

Bingo has a social order which is reflected in the spatial order. The arrangements of tables (and their occupants) within the room, as well as the arrangements of occupants within tables communicates the social order at bingo.

The tables nearest the caller were usually occupied by the largest groups of women, and the make-up of these tables was fairly stable. The tables furthest from the bingo caller were the least prestigious. They were normally occupied by players from non-English speaking backgrounds, and players with intellectual disabilities. One of these tables was pointed out to me and referred to as "the Italian Table". When I sat at this table, I found that there were several different nationalities present. The tables intermediate between these were usually used by looser groupings of individuals, married couples, pairs of friends and groups of three or four friends.

The seating arrangements at the level of the table also reflected aspects of the social order at bingo. Some tables were stable in their make-up, with generally the same group of friends at each bingo session. Other tables consisted of individuals, pairs or small groups of friends who move around depending on the availability of seating. When a place has been established, whether or not a player is permitted to – and whether or not they choose to – stay with the same people has social implications. I perceived that I had offended a group of players with whom I had sat on many occasions, when I sat at a different table on my next visit. Even changes within the table can have this effect. On one occasion, I moved across to an empty seat to talk more easily to a particular player, and someone else at the table made a comment about my moving as though I was snubbing them.

Territoriality

Territoriality, the means by which "space is defined, allocated, and maintained" (Spradley & Mann, 1975, p.101), can help to define groups and create a sense of belonging (Salari et al., 2006). The social order which exists at bingo is achieved largely by a system of actions and interactions which can be described as "minding seats". Seats are minded at bingo by objects, usually bingo markers, which function as "markers" (Goffman, 1971).

Seats are minded for a number of purposes, but bingo players attempted to establish and *maintain* a social order, and the latter requires stability in seating arrangements. Goffman observes that:

proprietary claims tend to grow up around chairs and other stalls so that
although these start out as part of situational provided territories available
on a first-come basis for any continuous period of use, they soon take on
the character of fixed territories possessed by one individual whether or
not he is present to claim by use. (Goffman, 1971, p.33).

Studies of groups of older people, including at bingo, have consistently found a preference
for the same seating, which enables people to sit with people of their own choosing (Keith,
1980; Dixey, 1987; Fallon, 1999). Establishing a fixed territory is often not possible at the
club, however. At bingo, for example, the configuration of tables changes when bingo is
moved from one venue to another, and tables within a room may be differently situated on
different occasions. Instead, minding a place for oneself and/or others functions in a
similar way, in that it enables people to sit with chosen others.

Minding is done, not only to claim a piece of territory for oneself, but usually to claim
territory for others as well. Players could mind seats for one other person, for several
others, an entire table, or even, in Phyllis's case, up to three tables. Some minding is done
for particular others, while some is flexible, so that the minder can pick and choose from
amongst bingo players who are looking for seats. It is a complex matter who is in a
position to mind seats, and where minded seats are located in relation to the minder:

> I found a table which seemed to have extra seats. As I looked around the
> table while standing near it, one woman motioned to the seat next to
> Ruby, indicating that I could have it. The woman was on the other side
> of the table but seemed to have control over the seat, whereas Ruby, even
> though the seat was next to her, did not (fieldnote 11)

Minding enabled the minder to ensure that the composition of the table was as much to
their liking as possible. At one end of the spectrum was minding to ensure that a specific
person, such as a friend, was included at the table, and, at the other end, there was minding
to ensure that specific people were excluded. In between, was minding the goal of which
was to enable the minder to have the option of selecting who can have the seat.

In this last situation, a player looking for a seat generally understood that a marker keeping
a spot did not necessarily mean that a spot was being minded for someone in particular.
For this reason, it was possible to ask the minder if the seat was available. I learnt this
when all seats where minded, and I, of necessity, asked at one table if there were places

available, and I was told by the women that there was. When I indicated that I thought the seat was minded, one of the women vaguely indicated that, in effect, it gave them the option of saying 'yes' or 'no' to a player in search of a seat. If the person seeking a seat was not known to the minder, this approval would be given or withheld on the basis of appearance. If they were known, then it would be based on previous interaction.

Some minding was intended to ensure that specific people were excluded. I observed this in action on only one occasion, but it is of interest because it shows clearly how minding may function as social control.   In this situation, the minders aimed to prevent an "intrusion" - that is, "an individual entering a territory to which he has no right of access, or otherwise contaminating a preserve" (Goffman, 1971, p.51).   I recorded in my fieldnotes:

> I looked around for a spot. From the closest table to front, Merv said "Want a seat?" "Yes", I replied. "Quick, take it!", he said. At the table, they all looked significantly at each other and made relieved noises. It was the last seat at the table. I asked why they were so keen for me to have the seat "or shouldn't I ask", giving them the option of not telling me. Lil said there was a "horrible man" at this table yesterday, who had "abused" them. "He took our seats", Merv said "We'd minded them". Their outraged tone suggested that the man had committed a major social transgression.   Then I noticed that the table was crowded with possessions: five handbags, newspapers, bingo markers.   They had waited nervously to see whether he would come back again today. He didn't. Lil commented that some of the people at the table hadn't come back today, and speculated whether it was because of the "horrible man". (fieldnote 36)

Although minding was common, not all bingo players sought to control the social makeup of their table. Some players were content to sit wherever they could find a seat, with the main priority being a seat closest to the bingo caller. For example, on one occasion, I asked Jill if the seats either side of her were taken. She made quite a point of saying that she never minded seats and did not approve of it.

Bingo was seen by players as an important source of social interaction, and there were a myriad of ways in which the game of bingo, as it is played at the Langley Club, facilitated social interaction. A number of other activities are provided by the Langley Club which

are also opportunities for older club-goers' social interaction. These include eating meals, attending entertainment and attending sub-club and ex-service activities. I will now briefly discuss each of these.

Eating meals

The Langley Club provided a range of spaces for club-goers to eat, including the Brasserie, Café, and places to eat food which has been purchased over the Bar, such as in the poker machine area, or in the Atrium. A survey of Sydney club-users found that most had a meal at a club at least once a month (Hing & Breen, 1999). The Langley Club's Brasserie was open for lunch and dinner. During the day, on weekdays, the majority of patrons of the Brasserie were older people. On weekends, the clientele were more diverse, and included families with young children. The Café opened early (7:30 am), and some older people who were at the club to play bingo or the poker machines went there before access was permitted to the Lounge, or before bingo started at 10:30 am. These waiting people often spilled out into the Atrium, where they could sit to have tea or coffee. During the day, Café patrons were generally younger than the Brasserie patrons. Older people tended not to have lunch in the Café, but rather in the Brasserie. Food was also served over the bar in the Lounge and Sports Bar, where it could be eaten in the table area, or at a poker machine.

I will now talk about social interaction and food consumption at the club. Older club-goers seemed comfortable to be eating alone at the club. I observed older people eating morning tea or lunch alone. Tom, for example, often bought a meat pie across the bar, and ate it in the Sports Bar. I also observed a woman eating alone after buying a sandwich and coming to the table area of the Lounge to eat it. Eating with friends was common as well. Club-goers ate together before, during or after other club activities, or were at the club specifically for the purpose of having lunch, morning tea, or afternoon tea with a companion. Olive describes having lunch with Mary after bingo:

> I get Mary's sandwich, every Monday [after bingo] … I go and order it at the interval … I get Mary's lunch for her. And we sit together as you saw us, and she reserves her machine [laughs], she loves that one machine! and I go and get her a cup of tea, and I have a cup of coffee (Olive interview)

In addition to meeting Mary for lunch, on other occasions, Olive meets a friend for afternoon tea: "One of my friends that lives down the road, she often meets me down there

for lunch or afternoon tea, which is nice". Julia regularly meets Cath for lunch, and she says "I never have lunch at home". Peggy talks about eating as part of a number of club activities:

> I don't <u>bother</u> getting over there till about twelve [on Saturday], and usually have a late-ish lunch, because it's <u>very</u> <u>crowded</u> <u>early</u> on, around twelve or one. So, <u>I might</u> play [the 'pokies'] till about two o'clock. <u>That's</u> in-between <u>talking</u>. You <u>stop</u> and you <u>talk</u> and you - and we have a bit of <u>lunch</u>, and we might come down and play for another <u>hour</u> or so
> (Peggy transcript)

Spouses often ate together at the club. Some attended the club in the evening for dinner. During the day, I observed spouses eating together, even when they had been doing separate activities. For example, I observed Mr and Mrs Tate take their morning tea to a machine and sit at adjacent machines to play while they ate. They did this without interacting, although once Mrs Tate pointed out something on her machine to Mr Tate. Club-goers also ate meals with other family members such as children or grandchildren. These meals tended to take place in the evening or on weekends. One older couple talked about being taken out to the club by their son one evening a week.

Attending Entertainment

Some older people attended entertainment events held at the club. Club entertainment has been, and continues to be, an integral part of registered clubs (PC, 1999). Entertainment is affordable because it is subsidised by profits, largely from poker machine takings (AIGR, 1999; Lynch & Veal, 2006). One of the regular older club-goers was to tell me that she became involved in the club through her husband who was a club "entertainer" in the days when clubs held regular "cabarets" and "shows". Although changed in character, the club continues to host live entertainment. Entertainment offered by the Langley Club included regular dinner concerts showing current pop singers. Live music, such as a male or female vocalist playing guitar and singing, is provided on Friday and Saturday nights in the Atrium.

A type of entertainment that was popular with older club-goers, and groups of older women in particular, was movies which were being played in the Sports Bar one night a week. During the course of the research, movies were discontinued, which prompted one older woman, Louise, to request their reintroduction in a question to the CEO at an AGM.

Louise asked: "When are the movies coming back on?".   Another woman said loudly "Thank you!", and there was a general murmur of assent. The CEO explained that screenings had been discontinued because the club was only permitted to screen movies which had been in the video shops for two or three months, and that this was too long after initial release to be of interest to potential viewers. Despite Louise's argument that this was not a deterrent for her or her friends, this decision was not changed.

Entertainment was of interest to some older club-goers. Pauline for example, when I ask her "Do you think you'd go to the club if it wasn't for bingo - do something else there?", she replies after a long pause: "I like live entertainment shows. I'd go over there like if there was some artist or that". I found that many older people spoke favourably about the entertainment available at this and other clubs, yet rarely attended themselves. Peggy indicates a possible reason for this, when she says, about clubs in general, that "they have wonderful entertainment, I believe, …I don't often go because I can't always be bothered going out at night".

Attending Sub-Club and Ex-Service Activities

For some older club-goers, the most important aspect of belonging to the club is involvement in particular sub-club activities. Sub-clubs generally benefit from the provision of facilities by the club and by subsidisation of their costs. Management's focus on the provision of the more lucrative gaming and hospitality services seems to have resulted in these services being given more space at the expense of facilities needed by sub-clubs.   It is in these sub-clubs that the "common purpose" aspect of registered clubs is most evident. This is exemplified by a submission to a government inquiry into clubs in which Mr and Mrs Horne, two members of a table tennis sub-club of Club Banora in northern NSW, talk about the significance of their involvement:

> We love the Table Tennis Club so much, we became President and Secretary 6 years ago, and love contributing to its success. Many Retired people tell us they wouldn't know what they would do, if the Table Tennis Club didn't exist (Horne & Horne, 2007).

One Langley Club Board member began his club involvement through his membership in a particular sub-club – a trajectory which was different from the usual ex-service one. Some Langley club-goers were clearly strongly attached to particular sub-clubs. Kevin, for

example, who was heavily involved in the swimming club, only attended the main Langley Club for its AGM, and for monthly Sub-Branch meetings.

Sub-clubs within the Langley Club generally provide recreational opportunities such as sports (bowls, in- and outdoor), swimming, darts, snooker, as well as other recreation such as travel and cards (euchre, solo, bridge). Recent major renovations left no room for indoor bowls which had been popular with older club-goers - Mary and Olive, for example, had met at indoor bowls. Similarly, one indoor sports sub-club lost its facilities during the renovations, and now uses facilities at a nearby club. Prior to that, the sub-club in question had called a Special General Meeting (of the full club) to try to have the situation rectified, but was unsuccessful. The lack of support for these sporting sub-clubs was symbolised to me by the pile of dust-covered trophies in cardboard boxes visible in a storage area of the carpark, which, no doubt, had been on display in the club prior to the renovations. The swimming club had looked forward to a pool which had been planned for the recent renovations but which did not eventuate. They continued to meet at a nearby swimming pool. A number of sub-clubs focus on particular card games. These sub-clubs meet regularly in various rooms within the Langley Club but find themselves, like bingo, being moved at short notice to accommodate business functions. A number of the people I spoke to were members of the travel sub-club. William, for example, had just been on a trip with the travel sub-club to Western Australia. This large successful sub-club enjoyed the support of several members of the Board who were on the Travel Club committee.

Some older club-goers were involved in groupings related to the ex-service nature of the club, such as the RSL Sub-Branch and its Women's Auxiliary. These groupings are not sub-clubs, nor are they formally connected to the Langley Club, but have a strong association with it, as we have seen. Members of the RSL Sub-Branch met monthly at the club in rooms dedicated to them, often having drinks in the Sports Bar before and after their meetings. Their dedicated rooms were used frequently by members involved in Sub-Branch business, such as provision of welfare services to the local ex-service community, including hospital visits and funeral assistance. In this they are supported by a club staff-person who helps with the books. Women's Auxiliary meetings are also held at the Club, as are their luncheons and dinners.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the site for this research which is the Langley Ex-Services and Community Club, providing details of the club as a place, of the actors involved in it, and of some of the activities and interactions which took place there. An account of the club's social and historical context shows how the club has changed, and changed in ways that were perceived by many older club-goers to be not in their interests. The large proportion of club-goers who are aged over 65 (approximately equal numbers of men and women) were largely from lower SES groups within the middle class Langley area.   These people used the club for a variety of activities which provided a wide range of opportunities for social involvement. I will now go on to consider this social involvement in more detail by describing, in the next chapter, the relationships of the older Langley Club-goers.

CHAPTER 5: RELATIONSHIPS OF THE OLDER CLUB-GOERS

Introduction

This chapter has three sections in which the relationships of older club-goers' are considered. The first section, *Accessing & Maintaining Social Networks,* addresses the process of initial access to club-based networks, as well as the process of continued integration into networks and the maintenance and development of existing relationships. The second section, *Description of Older Club-goers' Relationships*, describes the types of relationship in which older club-goers participate, and how these relationships are supported by club use. The relationships considered are friendships, relationships with family, casual interaction, and a vertical relationship between the club-goer and the club as an entity in its own right. The final section, *Network Norms*, focuses on the norms of *equality* and *tolerance and inclusiveness*, which function to create social capital.

Section I: Accessing & Maintaining Social Networks

This section begins by describing the initial process of network access, and then considers how this process continues as a person becomes increasingly integrated into club-based networks. The final aspect of network access to be described is the way that club-based relationships integrate some club-goers into a broader social network that is external to the club.

Initial Entry into Club-based Networks

Network access is the process by which club-goers became initially involved in club-based networks. Two broad patterns of access were observed which varied in the extent to which existing social networks were accessed. The majority of accounts in the data which described joining circumstances involved the older club-goer accessing their existing social

network. Prompting by a member - or members - of the older person's social network was often given as the main reason for joining the club. Such encouragement seemed to be successful only if the club-goer themselves perceived a need - and actively chose - to extend their social circle, a process also observed by Harris (1983). Club-goers saw this encouragement as the network member's attempt to help them deal with a loss situation, such as the death of a spouse, change in living arrangements, disabling health condition or loss of occupation.

For some club-goers, initial club access was via friends or family who were already involved in club-based social networks. This is a common pathway to associational involvement (Dempsey, 1990c; Glanville, 2005). Specifically, this took the form of encouragement to club participation by either siblings, children spouses, by friends or by neighbours, who were themselves club-goers. Peggy's joining circumstances provide an example. When her husband, Clarrie, died, Peggy felt "as though the world had been turned upside-down, I didn't quite know where I was". She accepted the invitation of her friend, Judy, to attend Ladies Day events at the South Rowley Club. Peggy reports:

> I usen't to go to that, but Judy said 'you'd better come along to that now,
> with us, we have a good time', you know. So I go (Peggy interview)

For Peggy it was the encouragement of a friend which led to her becoming involved in that particular club grouping. In Mary's case, it was her sister who encouraged her to club involvement: "Twenty-seven years this month, on the ninth of this month I came [to Australia]". I ask Mary if she started to come to the club immediately on her arrival and she replied:

> Yes, my sister - we came from the airport, and my brother-in-law
> couldn't pass the RSL. We came in there before we ever got down to
> their place! (Mary interview)[99]

Mary joined her sister in the Women's Auxiliary and still sees her sister at the club each week.

Some club-goers became involved through social networks with links to the club, but did not access an existing club-based network directly. These network members included

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[99] Extracts from the interview with Mary do not contain underlines marking stresses, because I transcribed this interview before I was aware of the value of transcribing these phonological features.

adult children (who rarely attended the club), and family or friends who were members of clubs other than the Langley Club. When Giselle's husband died, for example, she joined the Langley Club ("he died in January this year, that's why I started coming here")[100]. Giselle's children encouraged her to start: "My children are all members and they said "Mum, you should go to the club and *do* something".

In the second broad pattern of network access, there were those whose access process appeared to be less directly dependent on their social network[101]. Eileen, for example, was not drawn into club involvement via a friend or family member, and her motivation for joining was practical rather than social:

> I thought I would like to maybe join a <u>gym</u> or go <u>swimming</u> or do something and perhaps do it all year and the Langley Club was in the process of starting, you know, build this <u>new</u> one, and <u>originally</u> it said there's going to be a <u>swimming</u> pool. … so I thought '<u>I</u> think I might join', so that's <u>why</u>. And, of course, I've <u>always</u> rather <u>liked</u> <u>Bingo</u>. I mean, I just like - the <u>challenge,</u> I think, of keeping <u>up</u>. (Eileen interview)

Maurie joined Cougars Club without knowing any members when he and his wife relocated from the family home of thirty years to a distant suburb. The move was a big shock to him: "it was like losing everything - just cutting off your roots, chopping your roots off". Maurie set out to address what he saw as a need for new locally-based social involvements and, despite lacking access to social networks in the area, took up membership of Cougars Club[102]. After this initial phase, networks are maintained and sometimes further developed.

Increasing Integration into Club-based Networks

Club-based social networks are not static, and once accessed, members may become increasingly integrated. This occurs as new relationships are formed, and existing ones

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[100] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Giselle (p.298).

[101] For this group, club use was generally more instrumental and less expressive.

[102] Some degree of social network access may have occurred in these situations, in order to obtain information - such as that the club existed, its available facilities, its location and so on. Such information may well have been obtained from the local newspaper – the data does not indicate the source of their information.

change over time, for the remainder of the club-goer's club "career", to borrow a term from Goffman (1961a).

New friends are made at the club, as indicated by the many friendship dyads who had first met at this and other clubs. Relationships, once established, may change and develop over time. Olive describes this increasing integration: "I used to go to the Albion Leagues with … another friend … Unfortunately she died a couple of years ago". I ask Olive if she continues to go to the Albion Leagues, and she replies: "Yes, because, we've palled up with a couple of ladies up over there at the table." Tom, who originally joined the club because there was "nothing else to do" and for the "cheap beer", regularly meets up with friends he has made since joining.

The Role of Club-use in Accessing Wider Social Networks

In addition to accessing club-based social networks, some older club-goers access wider social networks through their club-based relationships. Peggy noted how the club gained access for Clarrie to other networks when on holidays:

> He belonged to golf clubs, of course, and when we went on holidays, often he'd duck up the golf club, he'd play golf, get some fellas, you know, he'd met and then he'd duck up the golf club for a couple of beers before coming back to the van or flat or whatever we had (Peggy interview)

Sub-club activities, such as the Travel Club, or sub-clubs which involve travelling away and meeting other people, such as bowls, also facilitate accessing wider networks:

> The clubs are right throughout NSW - the clubs are a way of life you know. … Some, they've got women's bowls teams within the club itself - depending on how big it is or where it is. I mean most of the urban - the towns and the country - they've got a bowling - lawn bowls or something in there. (Maurie interview)

Several club-goers noted that belonging to one club provided access to others. Alice explains that she joined the Langley Club, then the Albion Leagues Club: "With those two

cards you can go to any Leagues or RSL Club"[103]. Access to other clubs can also be informal. As we have seen, meeting a person at one club who attends another club might result in being asked to join them at the other club, thereby facilitating access to that new club.

Club-use may also facilitate access to wider social networks by enabling involvement in fundraising activities which benefit - and link the club-goer to - groups outside the club[104]. Peggy identifies the community service role of clubs, and thereby participates vicariously in the links to the wider society:

> They give <u>terrific</u> money to the <u>schools</u> in the area and they provide <u>healthcare</u>, and health - all the <u>welfare</u> officers, for the <u>people</u> in <u>hospital</u>, and all that. They do <u>all</u> that (Peggy interview)

Having described some ways in which networks are accessed, I will now turn to a description of these networks.

Section II: Description of Older Club-goers' Relationships

This section presents data on the relationships of the older club-goers in this study. The first part will describe established personal relationships, such as those between friends and family, and will be followed by a discussion of looser social connections between club-goers engaged in casual interaction with other club-goers or staff. In addition to these horizontal relationships, a vertical relationship between club-goers and the club is also described. These relationships (which have structural properties such as network diversity) function in such a way that social capital is created. This process will be considered further in Chapter Seven.

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[103] In the past, members needed to have membership of a particular type of club, such as RSL or Leagues, to access related clubs in other geographical areas.

[104] There was not a great deal of evidence of club-based voluntary activity (other than the Women's Auxiliary).

Friendships

Within an older person's informal social network are people with whom the older person has an individualised or personal relationship which can be described as 'friend-like' (Pahl & Spencer, 2003).   These relationships are distinguishable from relationships with acquaintances and strangers[105], and of course are distinct from relationships with family. Friend-like relationships vary in strength from quite loose casual friendships to very close friendships. The terms 'friend' and 'friendship' are often used for any of these friend-like relationships, but distinguishing between different types of friendships can be useful for understanding the ways in which club participation supports older people's relationships. Three broad senses of friend-like terms were used by older club-goers, which I will refer to as 'casual friendship' (described by Eileen as "friendly-casual"), 'usual friendship' and 'close friendship'[106].

This section will describe the role of club participation in supporting older club-goers' friendships. I will begin by talking about friendships of the 'usual friendship' type, before briefly considering the club's role in friendships of greater or lesser strength. Casual interaction is not dealt with here, but in the section entitled *Casual Interaction* (p.158).

Usual-Friendships

Being with friends was an important part of club participation for older club-goers. Mary connects her enjoyment of the club with her friendships there: "Oh, I enjoy going, yes, meet all different friends", and so does Maurie: "I just look forward to maybe running into a friend, sit and have a chat". Sometimes friends were described in gender-specific terms, such as 'girlfriend' (a woman's female friend) or "the girls" (for a group of female friends); or, for men, 'mate' or 'the boys'.

Club-based friendships had three main characteristics; they involved contact, reciprocity and intimacy[107], and I will discuss each in turn.

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[105] Participants sometimes made a distinction between friend-like relationships and, for example, someone they 'know', or an 'acquaintance': "They weren't particularly [longish pause while searching for words] - I wouldn't say they were friends,…I'd say they just knew each other from going to the [club]" (Peggy interview).

[106] To untangle the multiple meaning of friend-like terms that were used by club-goers, I used Key-Words-In-Context analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) which unearthed these three senses.

[107] These characteristics were identified by examining all uses of 'friend' to see what properties were associated with each use. The resulting nine properties have been grouped into these three broader clusters: contact, reciprocity and intimacy. The relevance of these three broad characteristics of friendship is captured

Having contact was, not surprisingly, fundamental to club-based friendships. Contact had both spatial and temporal dimensions, so that friendships were situated and also were influenced by frequency and duration of contact. Particular locations or activities were usually referred to in talk about friends, and friends interacted in most settings within the club. Having a drink together, for example, was a context for Maurie's friendship with a group of men he calls friends:

> If I come in and…they're here, we can sit down, you know Norman and
> Felix and, uh wee Jock, and myself (Maurie interview)

Friendships can be threatened by inability to stay in contact, as suggested by Mary's use of 'but' in the following: "I have a friend there but I mean she's like me, she can't get about". The club is important to Mary – it "means everything" to her, and being able to stay in contact with her friends at the club is a part of this.

Reciprocity, which has been described as "any relationship between two parties or things in which there is a mutual action, giving and taking" (Jary & Jary, 2005), was an important aspect of club-based friendships as well, and involved interactions between friends such as mutual commitment, the exchange of assistance and looking after one another's interests[108].

Friends showed commitment to the relationship by, for example, making arrangements to meet and honouring that arrangement. Some friends had committed to turning up on particular days of the week to engage in an activity together. Such commitment appears to have been seen by Olive, however, as a burden. Referring to Phyllis who minds seats for her and many other bingo players, Olive says:

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in the following definition of 'friends' as "persons, usually few in number and of one's own sex, with whom one enjoys relatively high degrees of social reciprocity, interpersonal intimacy and diffuse personal involvement (Jonas & Wellin, 1980, p.235). Researchers have identified other properties of friendship which did not seem to arise in this analysis, including *acceptance* ("valuing our friends as they are without trying to change them") and *respect* ("thinking our friends have the right to make their own judgments" (Rybash et al., 1995 p.199). My analysis did not systematically address the full range of possible meanings of 'friendship', as it was undertaken when the need for such an analysis was identified during data analysis. It is possible that additional properties would have been identified and/or this interpretation altered in some way.

[108] Although reciprocity is often seen as a norm, I found in this study that there was little *expectation* of reciprocity amongst older club-goers, but rather reciprocity functioned as "patterned social interaction" (Keith, 1980), or as a "network transaction" (ABS, 2004). Regardless of which classification is appropriate (that is, as a norm or a transaction), reciprocity functions to facilitate social interaction, group cohesiveness and social capital formation.

Olive: She <u>likes</u> to tell you '<u>you</u> sit there' and '<u>you</u> sit there' … and if I
can't go I have to ring her to say that I won't be there".

Virginia: "She expects that?"

Olive: "Yes, yes. But - I mean - she's wonderful for her age"[109].

Men's friendships did not seem to have the same sense of obligation, however. Maurie and
I are talking about the friends he meets each week at the club:

Virginia: So you don't arrange to see them it's just that you might all
turn up at the same time?

Maurie: Usually, usually they're here on a Tuesday and a Thursday at
lunchtime, round about - any time from about one o'clock onward
(Maurie interview)

The reciprocity of club-based friendships was also evident in the mutual assistance friends
provided to one another. Assistance involved both emotional and instrumental support.
Mary alludes to the role of mutual support in friendship in the context of her residential
relocation:

All those that were supposed to be friends, they were all going to come
and see me. There hasn't been one (Mary interview)

In her new home, she doesn't see a "soul", and reports that "on a Sunday, I think, "Oh,
thank goodness I can get down to the club tomorrow"" to meet with friends. Peggy, too,
turned to her friends at the club for emotional support. She appreciated the advice they
gave her when her husband, Clarrie died:

My <u>friends</u> have <u>told</u> me that … '<u>first</u> [you have] to go out all the time. …
then <u>suddenly</u> you get up one day and think 'oh, - <u>can't</u> be bothered
going out today, I'll just muck around at home' … and <u>gradually</u> you
kind of work yourself out (Peggy interview)

Instrumental support was provided by friends to friends in many ways. The act of giving -
which may be reciprocal when considered in a wider context of generalised reciprocity

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[109] Olive's comments suggest that Phyllis may have an expectation of reciprocity, that is, that minding will
be matched with informing when not there. This suggests reciprocity as a norm. Perhaps it is, but it is not a
shared norm, since Olive sees Phyllis' expectation as an unwarranted imposition.

(Sahlins, 1972) - was an important aspect of club-goers' friendships. Ruby[110], for example, reads romance novels, and says that when she is finished with one she gives it to friends: "I put my name in it and then I give them away to my friends at [another club]" [111]. Meat trays won at bingo are often given to friends, as reported by Eileen:

> Sometimes Pauline hasn't won for two or three <u>weeks</u> so I give her some
> of the <u>meat</u> if we've <u>won</u> it, or some <u>groceries</u>. <u>She</u> does the same … and
> <u>Phyllis</u> [and her friends], they all swap around <u>too</u>. (Eileen interview)

The final aspect of reciprocity identified in the older people's club-based friendships was the way that they looked after others' interests; friends considered the best interests of their friends and acts in line with them. At the club – particularly at Bingo - friends minded places for friends, as indicated by Mary:

> "Then <u>I</u> go -, and then I put the things down for <u>my</u> friends - wait for
> come in, and she puts them out the other side" (Mary interview)

Club-based friendships were also characterised by sharing of personal information and exclusivity, which I am considering together as aspects of intimacy[112]. On my first visit to the club to play bingo, I observed the almost instant sharing of personal information between my table-mates who had not known each other prior to that time. I observed many instances of friends routinely sharing personal information with each other.   I observed in the Lounge, for instance, as I record in my fieldnotes:

> [a male Board member] approaches a woman while she plays the
> 'pokies'. He puts his hand on her upper arm. She seems pleased to see
> him, and asks him how the house-selling is going. I can't hear much, but
> got the gist that it's a slow process, but looks like there might be some
> "movement" (fieldnote 50)

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[110] See Appendix H for a brief biographical sketch of Ruby (p.307).

[111] Ruby told me that putting her name in a book ensured that, if it is offered back to her, she would know that she had already read it.

[112] An important aspect of intimacy is 'positive affect', which "includes expression of liking, admiration, respect, or love" (Furman, 1997, p.41). Positive affect was not found to be a property of these relationships, which is not to say that it was not experienced that way by them, as it may simply have not arisen in the research situation. Positive affect was, however, found in the context of casual interactions, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Men shared personal information with their friends, as Maurie indicates when he is telling me about the men he meets regularly at the club:

> *Maurie:* [We] sit and have a chat and see what he's done in the last week or two and he ask me what I've done in the last week or two.
>
> *Virginia:* What sort of things do you talk to them about?
>
> *Maurie:* I think the topic of conversation the last time was the holiday we had in the UK, … you know, 'what'd you do?' …. We talk about family, about the sons and daughters how they're doing … and uh, how life's [inaudible] if there's any problems you know (Maurie interview)

Tom was able to tell me a great deal about a friend he meets at the club, including his friend's views on religion and politics.

Exclusivity was an aspect of intimacy in friendships as well, but it was mainly a property of close friendships, and I will now consider close friendships in the club context.

Close Friendships

Many older club-goers spoke of very close friends, but most did not meet with them at the club. Before discussing this, I will return to the role of exclusivity in close friendship, and see how this played out at the club. There were surprisingly few accounts of close friendships at the club[113]. Only one interviewee, Peggy, spoke of a close friend, Judy, with whom she spent time at the club, and Judy is an old friend who has only recently begun to accompany Peggy to the club.

Some club-goers were unsure about whether club-going could enable close friendships. I put the question to Olive, but her reply is equivocal:

> *Virginia:* Do you think it's possible to <u>make</u> close friends at the club? Some people - I hear this quite a bit 'we're <u>friendly</u>, but not necessarily really <u>close</u> friends'

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[113] Close friendships were generally of long duration, but other factors also affected the judgment of closeness in a relationship. Mary and Maurie talked about 'old friends' who pre-dated (but not by much) their relocations, suggesting that relocation may re-cast pre-existing relationships into being perceived as longstanding and hence as closer than they might otherwise seem. As close relationships were not a feature of club-based friendships, I am unable to pursue this further.

> *Olive:* No, no. Um, no, I don't know. Um, I don't know, I'm quite
> happy as I <u>am</u>, you know? Perhaps I'm antisocial, I don't know.

Martha and Myra, however, were more definite that the club is not a good setting for making close friends. In the context of a conversation about multiple club memberships, Martha said: "You don't make close friends", and when I asked her where she thinks it is possible to make close friends, she gave me the example of an old school-friend. When I asked Myra whether she had ever made friends at the club, she replied:

> No, I, ah, … <u>friends</u> are very hard to find. <u>Real</u> friends … and to me,
> that's - that's different.

Exclusivity (the extent to which a relationship excludes others) emerged in the analysis as the main factor which distinguished between usual friendship and close friendship. Olive has friends at another club whom she acknowledges as friends, but suggests that her relationship with them is of a less degree than is the relationship between the two of her friends, which Olive says is much closer.   Olive does not want to intrude into the relationship, which has limited her access to social networks at another club where she sees these friends:

> [tape restarts after being turned over] …. very good friends, so they go
> out together, and I wouldn't like to intrude on their friendship … so they
> go their own way. But we look forward to meeting once a month,
> exchange all news (Olive interview)

At the other end of the friendship spectrum are those friendships which are of lesser strength.

Casual Friendships

Not all older club-goers counted their friendships at the club as being significant. When I asked Martha, for example, if she had many friends at bingo she said that she did, but qualified this with "just acquaintances that we've met." Eileen identified this type of club-based relationship as 'friendly-casual':

> *Virginia:* How would you describe the friendship - the relationship you
> <u>have</u> with those people [at the club]?
>
> *Eileen:* Just <u>friendly casual</u> (Eileen interview)

Eileen's mother, Ruby, saw this sort of relationship as being limited in that these sorts of friends were unlikely to meet outside the club:

> *Virginia:* So you call those - you'd say that they're friends, those people?
>
> *Ruby:* Oh yes, we're quite friendly with them. But, we haven't visited, you know, started visiting one another, but we're quite friendly (Ruby interview)

Casual friendships did not require the same degree of commitment as with usual-friendship which included an element of commitment. This is indicated by Peggy, who explains friendly-casual relationship with some club-goers at another club:

> <u>We</u> always saw each other at the club <u>and</u> … go up and have lunch with them or something. Its always <u>spontaneous</u>, … you don't make a <u>date</u> like, they always say 'oh well, see you next week, things like that (Peggy interview)

The friendships of older club-goers can be seen to range from the casual to the more established, while close friendships were not much in evidence. Interactions with friends at the club enabled characteristics of friendship – contact, reciprocity and intimacy – that functioned to build and maintain older club-goers' friendships.

Family Relationships

This section describes club-based interactions between family members, and a range of ways in which club use facilitated interaction with family members.

Being with Family at the Club

Like most other people, older club-goers need access to opportunities to enjoy interaction with family members, as well as opportunities for the giving and receiving of support. Many of the interactions at the club took place between family members - whether intergenerational (such as between parent and adult child) or between members of the same generation (such as between siblings or spouses). Contexts for such interaction included a wide range of club activities, such as poker machine playing, 'passing time', taking part in sporting activities, and so on. Bingo, for example, was often attended by dyads, and sometimes, triads, of family members – a pattern observed in other studies as well (Dixey, 1987; Reitz, 2004).

It was quite common for older club-goers to attend the club with a daughter, and I also observed older club-goers with nieces or grandchildren. Peggy provides an example of mother-daughter use of the club. She had been attending the club with her married daughter for many years. Their usual pattern was to meet one day a week for a shopping trip, after which they went to the club. At other times, Peggy went to the club with this daughter - or with her other daughter - and with their families for a meal, as well as on special occasions (such as her son-in-law's birthday). I observed many people together whose physical resemblance suggested that they were mother and daughter. On occasions, I observed groupings which appeared to be of a daughter or son (and occasionally their partner) and their elderly parents, having a meal together. I did not, however, see any older men (apparently) accompanied by a child or grandchild, unless they were part of an older couple. I also sometimes observed what appeared to be grandparents and grandchildren together, usually in food service areas, and sometimes three generations of families eating together as well.

Same generation groupings were also observed. Regular bingo players included two pairs of sisters, a brother-sister pair and a group of three sisters.   I saw several pairs of women playing the poker machines together who resembled each other, suggesting they were siblings. Married couples were commonly seen at the club, often having dinner or lunch, playing the poker machines or bingo.

Managing relationships

The club also played a role in managing family interactions, particularly in managing difficult family relationships. Processes that I observed which seemed to serve the purpose of managing relationships to avoid or minimise problems included, firstly, using the club to give each other 'space'; secondly, using club-going to manage conflict; and thirdly, using the club to lighten the burden of caring responsibilities.

Some people made use of the club simply to give each other 'space', or to avoid being 'in each others' pockets', an issue for some couples post-retirement (Yogev, 2002). Spouses achieved this in one of two ways. Either, one of them attended the club while the other was elsewhere (such as at home or in another place), or both attended the club but they engaged in separate activities.

Thea and her husband 'give each other space' by engaging in activities in separate locations. Thea comments on this in relation to the role of her hobby:

> My <u>husband</u>… does <u>his</u> own thing, we don't sort of - now <u>he's</u> retired,
> you <u>can't </u>live in each other's pockets. We <u>do</u> clash from time to time
> [laughs] (Thea interview)

Thea and her husband engage in some activities separately, including Thea's attending the club:

> We do things together, but we also do things apart. … because otherwise,
> it gets, it gets too <u>much</u>. Its <u>full</u> on… you need your own <u>space</u> (Thea
> interview)

Yvonne also attends the club without her husband and spends time with a group of female friends there. She told me that her husband:

> Wouldn't come to bingo for the world…what's the point of sitting there
> just waiting for one number to come up? (Yvonne in fieldnote 9)

By going their separate ways, Yvonne and her husband can pursue activities which are of interest to them.

The second way that spouses 'gave each other space' was to attend the club together but to engage in separate activities. Being in the same venue at the same time minimises transport difficulties and provides security, particularly for the female spouse. Couples are also able to come back together intermittently for companionship, such as to have a meal together. Merv and Lil, for example, come to the club together for Lil to play the poker machines (to which they both say she is "addicted") and for Merv to bet on the horses. Maurie's wife plays the poker machines while Maurie sits and talks to his 'mates'.

Not all couples felt a need to 'give each other space'. There are some couples who were more than happy to spend their time at the club in the company of each other.

Some family relationships involved conflict, and club-going helped family members to manage that conflict. This was done by, firstly, reducing time spent together and secondly, reducing the intensity of the relationship by enacting it in a more public setting.

Some club-goers used club participation as a means of reducing interaction with family members, and hence of minimising conflict. Myra lives with her daughter and son-in-law, and indicates in the interview that this is not a conflict-free situation. Myra, at least on this

occasion, came to the club to escape some difficulties at home. When I ask Myra, "When you feel like going [to the club], you go?", she replies:

> Oh God! Yes. Like yesterday afternoon, something happened, I got a bit
> upset, and I thought: "That's it, under the shower, dressed, down here".
> Then I rang them up and said: "Guess where your mother is?" "I can
> hear, Mum, where you are." (Myra interview)[114]

Some older club-goers sought to regulate difficult relationships by reducing the intensity of interaction rather than reducing the amount of interaction. By enacting the relationship in the club setting, intensity of interaction could be reduced. I observed this for family members who live together and for those who did not.

Eileen and her mother, Ruby, manage conflict in their relationship which Eileen at least, sees as resulting from their living in the same house. Eileen and Ruby attend the club together, which functions to relieve the intensity of one-on-one contact at home. I interviewed both Ruby and Eileen and it was clear from both interviews that there was some tension in their relationship. Ruby was critical of a number of things Eileen did at home, although she did not specifically identify this as conflict. Eileen, on the other hand, was aware of tensions at home:

> *Virginia:* So with the bingo, with you and your mother. Do you think if
> you were here together a lot, you'd start to get on each others <u>nerves</u>?
>
> *Eileen:* Probably, yes. <u>I've</u> been - the <u>whole</u> <u>point</u> <u>is</u> - in the house like
> this, I've been used to doing <u>everything</u>… <u>she</u> thinks - <u>she</u> thought she
> was going to come and <u>help</u> <u>me</u> and I said: 'No, listen, leave it <u>alone'</u>.
> We do things <u>differently</u> …. she says I won't let her <u>do</u> things. And as I
> say; 'Mum, leave things alone'. [laughs]. …Yes, if we were here all the
> time we'd probably get on each others' nerves." (Eileen interview)

A related strategy was employed by Mary to limit the intensity of her relationship with her sister, Edith, who lives in a separate household. Mary is concerned that she would not be able to see Edith as much as she feels she should, if it were not for the time they both spend at the club. Mary is able to spend time with Edith – an obligation she feels towards

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[114] As Myra cut the interview short, it was not possible to follow-up on all the issues raised in Myra's narrative.

her as a sister - and club-going enables this in two ways. Firstly, it makes being together possible when it might not otherwise be, and secondly, when they are together, the emotional intensity is minimised when compared to, as might otherwise be the case, a one-on-one home visit. I will examine this situation in more detail.

Mary appears to have a sense of obligation towards Edith. For example, she says "of course" she joined the Women's Auxiliary because Edith did, and "I've got no-one else". Mary's sense of obligation to Edith may have increased as Edith's memory has worsened, and with the death of Edith's husband. This familial obligation is reinforced by their doctor who, according to Mary, often asks her when she is going to see Edith again. But Mary's familial obligation is not matched by sisterly affection. She describes Edith as "mean", talks about their unresolved "falling out", says "we've never been close", and generally seems reluctant to talk about Edith in the interview, answering my questions about their relationship in monosyllables. I got the impression that if Mary could choose, she would not spend much time with Edith.

Edith does not come to visit Mary in her home, and Mary is not physically able to go to visit Edith. In fact, Mary says, "I only see her there, at the club". Thus, the club provides Mary with the opportunity to see Edith when she might not otherwise. Their interaction at the club, however, is quite minimal – probably just enough for Mary to fulfil, what she sees as, her obligations.   When I ask Mary if they have lunch together, she replies that they do not and laughs embarrassedly. When they are together, interaction is minimal:

> I see her Monday and Tuesdays, but she never has much to say, she never seems to talk very much at all. ...All she does is smoke. Smokes a cigarette (Mary interview)

A final, potentially problematic, relationship to be considered here is the relationship between carer and the person being cared for.

I found that club-going was of some help to those older club-goers who had caregiver responsibilities. In reference to a previous example, Mary was concerned about what she perceived to be Edith's failing memory, and their joint club-going may have enabled her to continue to monitor the situation (as requested by her doctor). Similarly, an element of Eileen's relationship with her mother, Ruby, is that Eileen feels responsible for Ruby. Club-going together enables Eileen to ensure Ruby is safe when she goes out:

> … easy to park [at the club], and particularly if Mum comes <u>with</u> me. I
> mean as <u>good</u> as she <u>is</u> for her <u>age</u>, it's so much <u>easier</u>… I <u>don't</u> have to
> watch her going up and down the <u>steps</u> and <u>things</u> like this (Eileen
> interview).

Furthermore, Eileen saw value in Ruby's club-going because it meant that Ruby was
actively engaged outside the house:

> <u>Otherwise</u> I would be tearing around, Mum would probably be <u>sitting</u> in
> that <u>chair</u> over there, just <u>read</u> all day (Eileen interview).

Assistance with caring responsibilities was evident in the case of the Tates whom I
observed on a number of occasions in the Lounge. Mr Tate appeared to me to be suffering
from dementia, but he and his wife, Helen, were able to function quite well at the club,
with some assistance from staff. Helen was, presumably, temporarily relieved of some of
the burden of David's care, during these club visits. Further, as caregiving inhibits social
participation (ABS, 2007), Helen may have benefited from the social interaction, reducing
the risk of social isolation associated with caregiving.

In summary, family relationships are an important part of club interaction, and family
members participate in a variety of club-based activities. Relationships were observed
between family members of the same and different generations. In addition to being an
opportunity to ensure interaction with family, the club is used by older club-goers in some
circumstances to minimise actual or potential conflict in the relationship.

Casual Relationships

Casual encounters with other club-goers and staff were a regular occurrence for older club-
goers, and were seen by many as a feature of club participation. Relationships with
acquaintances, strangers and staff were, consequently, important elements in many club-
goers' social networks – supplementing relationships with family and friends. In this
section, I will first describe interaction of a casual nature that occurs between fellow older
club-goers, and then describe interaction between older club-goers and staff members.

Casual Relationships with Fellow Club-users

Many older club-goers had relationships with other club-goers which were of this casual
nature and involved interaction which, though incidental, had elements of *reciprocity* and

intimacy[115].   These relationships, in some ways, mirror the reciprocity and intimacy of relationships with friends.   Before discussing these, however, I will consider some aspects of the particular context for this casual interaction.

Features of context situate casual interaction and may facilitate or inhibit it, as well as determine its content, direction and so on.   Just as 'contact' was an aspect of friend-like relationships, so it is for these looser relationships.   The previous chapter provided descriptions of many contextual features which affect casual encounters, including, for example, the seating arrangement in the table area of the Lounge which encouraged interaction between seated people and passers-by. This section will highlight one contextual feature – the context created by the poker machines – to show how it can underpin significant social interaction.

In this story by Myra, casual social interaction appears to be experienced as subjectively important, yet this experience is integrally bound up with the experience of poker machine playing. In the interview, Myra and I have been discussing an instance in which she started interacting with two other poker machine players, with whom she was to reconnect on subsequent occasions:

> And they said: "Do you come <u>here</u>*?"* and I said: "Yes", and they said
> "<u>We</u> come", they said, "every fortnight", and, uh, because of pension
> weeks. And, they come down, and - I think they were playing three coins,
> or five coins in a one cent machine - and, when they were leaving, she
> said "I hope you have luck", she said "I've won <u>three</u> dollars!". And she
> was <u>thrilled</u>, and I think this is part <u>of</u> the club. People talk and they get
> that bit of enjoyment. They don't do a lot of money, but then again they
> don't <u>win</u> a lot of money (Myra interview)

This narrative seems a little confusing at first, and understanding the reason for confusion provides insight into the social role of casual interaction. The narrative makes most sense when it is thought of as two interwoven narratives (or threads within the narrative) - one about casual social interaction, and the other about pleasure from poker machine playing (Table 2 on p.160):

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[115] I have concluded this on the basis of a KWIC analysis of the term "friendly" which, as an adjective, was applied to interactions, including casual interactions.

Thread 1: "people talk"	Thread 2: "they get that bit of enjoyment"
and they said: "Do you come here?" and I said "Yes" and they said "We come …"	they said "every fortnight", and, uh, because of pension weeks, and, they come down, [orientation]
and, when they were leaving, she said "I hope you have luck",	And - I think they were playing three coins, or five coins in a one cent machine - [complication]
and I think this is part of, the club…. People talk [evaluation]	she said "I've won three dollars!" [complication]
	And she was thrilled, [result]
	and I think this is part of the club. …they get that bit of enjoyment [evaluation]
	They don't do a lot of money, but then again they don't win a lot of money [coda]

Table 2: Analysis of Myra's narrative illustrating the interdependence of social interaction and pleasure. The comments in square brackets identify narrative elements (as used by, for example, Labov & Waletzky, 1997 [1967])

In the first thread, Myra makes the point that the social interaction is "part of the club". She illustrates this by actually reproducing a bit of casual conversation which appears quite meaningless unless seen as an example of "people talking": When the women with whom she is talking say to her: "Do you come here?", she replies: "Yes". The conversation continues, and is evaluated as, "I think this is part of the club… people talk". The other thread of the narrative highlights the aspect of the interaction with the women which Myra is using to illustrate the enjoyment which can be derived from 'pokie'-playing. The story is about the women playing the poker machines with a small amount of money, and being pleased with their small win ("and she was thrilled"). The evaluative clause ("they get that bit of enjoyment") needs to be seen as relating to the experience of playing and/or winning at the poker machines, rather than more generally[116]. The shared nature of the evaluation

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[116] Referring to playing and/or winning as "a bit of enjoyment" softens the implication that the players are deriving pleasure from a stigmatised activity. It is further softened by the coda: "They don't do a lot of money, but then again they don't win a lot of money".

"I think this is part of the club…" highlights the interdependency of the social and the pleasurable.

The fact that there are two interwoven narratives here is significant. It is not an indication of Myra's failure to tell a coherent narrative, but is rather an indication that, for Myra, the social aspect of casual interaction during poker machine playing, and the winning aspect, are intertwined and inseparable. The club is a particular context which facilitates this type of casual interaction. This points to the importance of both casual interaction and poker machine playing as contexts for interaction.

Some casual interactions showed a degree of intimacy, and this can be seen in Myra's continuation of the story presented above. I ask Myra: "Those women you spoke to, do you think you'd speak to them again if you saw them again?", and she replies:

> Oh, God, yes, I did. I saw them a few weeks later, and they looked at me
> and they said: "Oh, you're the lady who was sitting next to us". I said,
> "Yes, how are you" and they said, "Oh good" and, um, one - I had to
> laugh at her - she's sitting there. We'd been sitting there a while, she
> said: "You know what? My bum's getting sore from sitting here", and I
> said: "Well, you'd better stand up then" and she said: "My legs are too
> short" and I said: "Don't worry dear, I have the same feeling", I said, "so
> are mine short" you know (Myra interview)

Intimacy is indicated here by the informality of speech, including "my bum". There is sharing of personal information, such as talk about length of legs, and reassurance in "don't worry", as well as in the appeal to things they have in common: "I have the same feeling.. so are mine short". Myra is aware that the interaction is limited in its intimacy:

> You mightn't know each other's names but you - next time you go, they
> all wave "Hi, how you going today?" (Myra interview)

I observed many instances of small-talk at the poker machines which, along with Myra's example, point to the intimate quality of some casual relationships. I heard, for example, a conversation between two women in which one said to the other, sounding surprised, "Hello!" to which the other replied: "We like the same machines, don't we?". When the second women later won something, the first woman said "Well done! Give you something to increase your bet with". Men sitting alone also interacted with each other in a casual manner which had elements of intimacy. I recorded in my fieldnotes:

> A man took a seat by himself, got a beer, went to buy the paper and came
> back to his seat. When he couldn't find his glasses, he commented to the
> men behind where I was sitting that he left his glasses at home so
> couldn't read the paper. One of them replied: "Probably a good thing."
> He agreed, but opened the paper anyway, perhaps reading the headlines
> (fieldnote 5)

Small-talk, and other incidental interaction, often had an intimate quality which, although paradoxically occurring between strangers or acquaintances who were interacting in a casual way, may have contributed to such casual interaction being seen as an attraction of the club. This can also be seen in the *reciprocal* nature of casual relationships.

Another feature of club-based casual interaction is that it has elements of *reciprocity*. An example from my fieldnotes exemplifies this:

> I saw a woman, June (I was to find out), having a coffee. I had seen her
> earlier when I arrived. She had been at the reception desk. I overheard a
> male receptionist saying that the mobile phone she had been trying to
> ring was out of range. She told him that she was trying to contact her
> daughter whom she was supposed to meet at the club at 12 noon. It was
> after one pm. She told him she was going into hospital that afternoon.
> When she was in the Cafe having coffee, an elderly couple came in and
> saw her. The woman addressed June by name. June explained the
> problem and both reassured her, which surprised me as June's daughter
> was already one and a half hours late. The couple had some afternoon
> tea, then, as they were leaving, the woman touches June on the arm,
> saying "Hope goes alright with the leg" (fieldnote 47).

June was eventually successful in contacting her daughter. Although somewhat hollow, the expressions of concern offered to June have overtones of the reciprocity referred to earlier; in particular, 'looking after each others' interests'. The concern shown to June may well have provided some consolation and given her a sense of connection in the casual interaction.

Casual Relationships with Staff Members

The importance of casual relationships with staff - in comparison with relationships with fellow club-goers - is in evidence in the large number of such interactions observed in the

data. This type of relationship was clearly important to many of the older club-goers. Positive staff interactions were given as a reason for club-going, and these comments by Myra and Olive, respectively, support this: "And the <u>girls</u> are lovely… and you can have a <u>joke</u> with them" and "I <u>like</u> some of the <u>staff</u> there. I like the girls in the Cafe, they're very nice". Member-staff interactions possessed elements of reciprocity, intimacy as well as positive affect[117].

Intimacy-like interaction was observed in casual relationships, and was exemplified in the frequent use of each others' names by staff and members, as well as by the sharing of personal information. Being known by name by the staff was a factor identified by Peggy in her sense of belonging at the South Rowley Club:

> They're all so lovely that that's like going to a second <u>home</u>, if you know
> what I mean … Even the <u>girls</u> on the desk, everyone, <u>all</u> know you by
> name" (Peggy interview)

Names were used by staff in casual interaction. Men 'passing time', for example, were observed to interact in this way with staff. I heard one man being greeted by a staff member walking past who said, "Gidday, Tony".

Some use of members' names by staff may have been related to a deliberate strategy to encourage members to feel connected, perhaps with the overall aim of encouraging continued club use, and particularly continued poker machine playing[118]. At the poker machines during a promotion, for example, Stuart used names over the public address system. Welcoming a recently arrived player, he announced over the loudspeaker: "We've got Mr [name]!". On another occasion, Stuart announces: "Maria, Mum's looking for you". At bingo, the caller knew the names of most of the players, and made up nicknames based on personal characteristics.

As indicated earlier, an aspect of intimacy is knowing personal details about the other person, and this, too, was in evidence in staff-member interactions. Adam, the bingo caller, would provide players with snippets of personal information about other players, such as

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[117] Once again, the impetus for this discussion is the KWIC analysis of "friendly" as it applied to staff. "Friendly" was applied to staff in many cases, but staff were not generally seen as "friends".

[118] Interactions, places and the actions which create the impression (intentionally or otherwise) that genuine relationship is occurring when it is not has been referred to "crass pseudo-Gemeinschaft" (Goffman, 1959, p.58)

"Let's say goodbye to Jill who's going back to New Zealand tomorrow". Birthdays are announced by Adam (after being conveyed to him by the bingo-players), and the recipient stands and is applauded[119]. Conversely, personal information about staff is known by members. I observed two friends stopping a staff member, addressing her by name, and, while asking if she had recently had her hair cut, touched her hair. In another example, Olive told me this about a staff member:

> Julie's just come back from South America, and she was telling me on
> Monday she went to Bolivia and Peru and the Inca trail, and I said 'oh
> lovely!' (Olive interview)

This personal information had been shared by the staff member with Olive. I observed an interaction of this type between Stuart, the pokie promotion host, and a group of women gathered around a poker machine. Stuart was telling them that his mother was in hospital having her knee reconstructed. Such interactions create a perception that there is a degree of intimacy in relations with the staff.

The reciprocal nature of this staff-member interaction is illustrated by a member who received Life Membership of the Langley Club and said of his wife and himself during his acceptance speech (reported in the club newsletter): "We've got to know the … staff and they've got to know me".

Some reciprocity-like interactions between staff and members are more institutionalised than those described above. The practice of opening the big glass doors for members to enter was commented on by members, who enjoyed being "waited on", creating a sense of being cared for and provided with assistance. Personalised service for poker machine players created the impression that they are cared about and that staff were interacting personally with individual members. Myra reported, for example, that she had observed people who were very flattered when approached by a staff member while playing the poker machines to be asked: "Would you ladies like a cup of coffee?", with Myra reporting that "They'd never come across *that* before!".

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[119] At another club, I was told, recognition of club-goers' birthdays extended to being given a bottle of wine and a free dinner.

A property of some casual interactions with staff is their warmth or positive affect. Regarding the staff, Peggy says that "I've never found *anyone* rude in the attendants at the club, never. *Always* very nice and helpful".

In addition to having elements of intimacy and reciprocity, relations with club staff can create a sense of belonging to a group. A strong connection between members and staff was evident in the similarities (real and created) between members and staff and in the willingness to include staff in their personal social network. These factors – usually associated with strong ties in close relationships – may elevate member-staff relationships to a higher level of salience for older members than might otherwise be expected.

The social distance between staff and members was reduced, in many instances, by similarities between members and staff. Staff members with whom older club-goers appeared most connected were often similar in age. Roles between members and staff were sometimes blurred: Brian, a 61 year old staff member, saw himself as a potential subject of my research, hinting on several occasions that I could interview him since he, too, was an older person. Sharon is also an older staff member, and as well as being the bingo hostess was a regular club-goer on her days off, at which time she often socialised with the members who play bingo on her workdays. Occasionally, members took on the role of staff, such as a man whom I observed clearing up used dishes after Brunch Bonanza.

Some older club-goers clearly counted staff as members of their personal social networks, although the ties varied in strength. Peggy equates staff with fellow club-goers in reply to my question:

> *Virginia:* How many <u>people</u> would you … be meeting <u>up</u> with [on Saturday at the South Rowley Club]?
>
> *Peggy:* Oh golly, <u>I</u> don't know, the <u>staff</u> are all friendly, we <u>know</u> them. And <u>Mick</u> and the boys that <u>happen</u> to be there, sitting at the table, you know, where <u>Clarrie</u> used to sit. They're all there, and a lot of my Ladies' Auxiliary ladies are there (Peggy interview)

Occasionally closeness between members and staff can become so strong as to resemble that of family, as is the case for Mary, in her relationship with a young male staff member. When I was at Mary's house for the interview, I was looking at a photograph of her grandson on the sideboard, when she indicates another photograph and says: "You probably know that young man there", pointing to a large framed photo of a man in his

mid-twenties with two older women, dressed such that they could only be at a wedding. I told Mary that I did not recognise him, to which she replied, somewhat reproachfully, "Well, he's on the door at the club". Mary went on to tell me that the young man had previously worked at the club and used to regularly help Mary out - "if I wanted to go anywhere, he would run me there". I had assumed he must be a relative because his photo stood beside photos of her two grandchildren, and asked: "So, what's his relationship to you?"   She replied: "There's none, but I met him with, he used to be the driver of the coach". For Mary, then, the young staff member featured alongside grandchildren in her social network, and may even have been more significant as she had very limited contact with her children and grandchildren.

The Relationship with the Club

Another relationship also featured and can be considered *vertical* - the relationship between an older club-goer and the club as an entity. The data supported the notion that an organisation (such as a club) could operate as an element in a person's social network. A conceptual analysis of the term 'club' - as it was used by older club-goers - identified a number of meanings of 'club' which are significant for understanding the nature and strength of the connection between the club and club-goer. There were two straightforward senses of 'club' -'club as place' [120] and 'club as people' [121]. In addition to these straightforward meanings, a higher order meaning of club as 'voluntary association' also emerged. Although it is possible that a voluntary association might be viewed simply as a grouping of people, the meanings of 'club' - as used in context by the club-goers - suggest

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[120] Used in this way, 'club' has a meaning akin to a shortening of 'club-house' or 'club-rooms'. This is consistent with a dictionary definition of 'club' as "the building or rooms owned by or associated with … a group, sometimes lavishly decorated and furnished, and offering dining, gambling, theatrical and other facilities to members" (Macquarie Dictionary, 2005). In another sense, although still a place, the club is identified as a site for certain activities or identified with those activities themselves. For Ruby, for example, "club" means bingo - when I ask her about the "club", she replies about "bingo" without distinguishing between them.

[121] This sense fits with a definition of a club as "a group of persons organised for a social, literary, sporting, political, or other purpose, regulated by rules agreed by its members" (Macquarie Dictionary, 2005). For some, the club is identified with the club membership, either in total or with some sub-grouping of the membership. Mary seems to see the club as being the total membership: "but I think when we moved into the new club there were all these new machines", while some identified with a sub-set of the membership, such as the Women's Auxiliary or bingo players. A further meaning of club, related to its people (but not, in this instance, its membership), is the club as management. No club-goer fully identified the club with its management, but this was an element of meaning for some. Maurie, for example, identified the club with its management in one instance: "It's safer and they won't tolerate any nonsense". A more abstract version of this meaning is the club as "service provider", often conveyed by an un-named and powerful "they".

that the club was seen as more than the sum of its (people) parts and of the building it occupies[122]. A similar finding has been made in relation to voluntary leisure groups:

> it becomes clear from almost everybody we interviewed that a group is both 'different from' and 'more than' the sum of its members, with an 'existence' which can continue even after all original members have left (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986, p.3)

The Perceived Importance of the Relationship with the Club

Just as friendship and casual relationships are important to many older club-goers, the club relationship was also important to some, but not all, older club-goers[123]. I will show how this importance is indicated in the data. Mary indicates directly that the club is extremely important to her when I ask: "What would you say it means to you in your life - having the club where you can go?". She replies: "It means everything at present". Similarly for Pauline:

> *Virginia:* How important would you say the club is to you in your life now?"
>
> *Pauline:* Very! Very! …I do look forward to Monday and Tuesday morning very much, Virginia, I do. (Pauline interview)

 Thea, on the other hand, says that the club is not important to her. In addressing the research question, which I have put to her, she replies:

> I come about once a week. Usually after visiting - visiting my mother … in the nursing home. …have a nice cup of coffee, and some lunch. And, um, that's about it. Once a week, and usually its on Friday. … but it's not major its just a relief from the - from - relief from visiting - aged people, which is very sad. (Thea interview)

Olive, too, does not identify the club as very important to her, when I ask her:

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[122] Linguistically, a clue to this is the use of the word "it" to refer to the club (when it is clear from the context that "it" does not refer to the club as a place). "It" cannot be used to refer to people, and hence must be referring to a more abstract entity. Additionally, "club" is used to refer to something distinct from people (again, in contexts where it's meaning is clearly not a place meaning), as indicated by the "and" in Peggy's comment about the bingo hostess: "Sharon liked the club, and the people".

[123] The data indicated that the club was not important to people who had strong social networks which were external to the club, and who were using the club for instrumental purposes.

>*Virginia:* How important would you say the club is to you, in your life,
>then?
>
>*Olive:* I think it's a good <u>outlet</u> because it's <u>somewhere</u> to go, <u>somewhere</u>
>to see your <u>friends</u> and that's <u>it</u>, and it's <u>lovely</u>. And to have just a <u>nice</u>
>little <u>conversation</u>, something to eat and drink. <u>Good</u>. <u>Good</u>. … Just that,
><u>really</u> it's just an <u>amusement</u>, <u>really</u> (Olive interview)

Olive's understated reply and use of "and that's it" suggests that the club is not particularly
important to her.

Another indicator of the strength of the member-club relationship is that, for some, the
club's importance increases over time. Once again, its significance for Mary is clear when
this time I ask her: "Has it come to mean more to you over the years?", and she replies
enthusiastically: "Yes, oh yes! Although I've always enjoyed going". On the other hand,
when I ask Eileen to project into the future and consider whether the eventual death of her
mother will make a difference to her club-going, she replies "<u>Probably</u> not, no. <u>That's</u>
what I said about me and the club. It's just a nice casual relationship there".

Another example of the subjective importance of the club is provided by the Life Member
who reported in the club newsletter that he could recall the exact post-WWII date when he
joined the club:

>I even have my original receipt of joining. For some reason, it's
>something I've chosen to keep all these years although, as a rule, I never
>collect receipts.

A further indication of subjective importance is the extent to which the club-goer would
miss the club if they were unable to attend. When I ask Peggy how important the club is to
her, she doesn't answer directly, but imagines a scenario in which there are few clubs: "I
<u>wouldn't</u> like to live in Queensland where there are no <u>clubs</u>". Eileen believes that her
mother, Ruby, is "hooked" on bingo at the club: "She'd hate to miss any day. Only if we
were going away would she miss it". Ruby, herself, seems almost to agree with her
daughter's assessment: "Well I suppose I <u>could</u> live with<u>out</u> them…". Mary is more
definite about the negative implications of not being able to go to the club: "Life would be
terrible!". Eileen, on the other hand, does not miss the club when she is not able to attend,
and gives this as an explanation for why the club is "not dreadfully" important to her: "I
mean, I can go <u>away</u> for <u>months</u> and not <u>think</u> about it."

The club's importance relative to other aspects of life gives an indication of subjective importance for some. For Maurie, the club is bound up with something expressly important – the "roots" he lost when he relocated out of the neighbourhood which included his home and club. He addresses my question about the importance of the club to him by replying: "I think it's part of the – it's part of life". Others, on the other hand, identified other life activities as being more important than their club involvement. Thea, for example, who has already said that her interest in the club is "not major", says of her hobby that "it's something that – it's something that I couldn't <u>not do</u>".

Having to overcome significant obstacles to attend the club may attest to the club's importance. Peggy recounts the last days of her husband, Clarrie's life in which, though near death, he struggled to visit the club:

> And <u>on</u> the Saturday, he <u>still</u> said, 'I <u>think</u> I'll go over the <u>club</u> and have a
> couple of beers with the <u>boys'</u>… [and he died on] <u>Sunday night</u>, …<u>three</u>
> o'clock in the morning" (Peggy interview)

Mary, too, must struggle to make it to the club:

> I get up at seven o'clock, because it takes me roundabout two hours to
> get ready. Takes me ages to get a shower and get dressed, make the bed
> and then come and get my breakfast" (Mary interview)

Others attended the club the morning after returning late the evening before from an overseas trip, and Maurie travels long distances to return to the club from his former neighbourhood.

Nature of the Relationship with the Club: Attachment

The most salient quality of the member-club relationship is "attachment". Some older club-goers indicated strong attachment in their relationship with the club. Identification with the club, and displays of allegiance to it, are indicators of attachment. This is evidenced by Eileen's choice of words indicating identification of a person with a club, as she describes her friend's husband's club involvement:

> I have a lot of <u>friends</u>… that <u>love</u> clubs, and they go <u>constantly</u> to clubs.
> In fact <u>one</u> of my very good friends,… her <u>husband</u>, he was the <u>Rowley</u>
> RSL, I think (Eileen interview)

Eileen's use of "he was" in "he was the Rowley RSL" was not a slip of the tongue, since such strong identification of members with particular clubs is not unusual. Terms such as "mother club", "allegiance" and "my club" were used by several male club members to refer to their membership. I also observed one male member to be wearing a vest with the insignia of another local club.

Another indicator of the attachment which characterises, for some, the member-club relationship, is the 'homelikeness' of the club, since home is a site of attachment *par excellence* (Altman & Werner, 1985; Rowles & Chaudhury, 2005). Some club-goers equated the club with home, referring to it as a "home away from home" and "homey"[124]. There are actions of club-goers which also point to the club's homelikeness. The club was often used in a way which is typical of home, but not typical of public places, such as, for example, personal possessions being left unattended on tables. In doing this, club-goers often "privatised" (semi-)public space at the club, turning it into a 'home territory' or "a home away from home" (Lofland, 1973, p.199). Other mundane uses of the club were also more typical of home than a public place, such as a place to do craftwork such as knitting.

The importance of the club to many older club-goers, the allegiance which is held by some members, as well as home-like qualities of the club, point to the member-club relationship being potentially one of strong attachment. Similarly strong attachment to registered clubs has been observed in the context of other clubs, as well (Yeronga Services Club & Pullar, 1999; Sekuless & Rees, 1986; CCCANZ, 1999). Attachment to the club was sometimes extended to the club movement as a whole, and extended to club-going as - in Maurie's words -"a way of life": some members clearly saw themselves as being attached to something bigger than an individual club, which has been termed "the club movement" (RCA NSW, 2006).

Section II has described some of the relationships supported by club participation. Relationships between older club-goers and their friends or family members took place at the club, and were characterised by contact, reciprocity and intimacy. In addition, aspects of club involvement played a role in regulating and managing relationships. Casual relationships, such as between acquaintances and strangers also featured at the club, and shared properties of intimacy and reciprocity which were observed in closer relationship of

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[124] The homelikeness of registered clubs was recognised as long ago as 1930. Caldwell (1972) quotes from a newspaper article in 1930 in which the then Secretary of the Registered Clubs' Association said that clubs were "virtually the homes of members" (Caldwell, 1972, p.61).

friends and family. In the particular context provided by club use, another type of relationship also featured, which is a vertical relationship between the club-goer and the club as an entity in its own right. For some, this relationship was characterised by a sense of belonging, and contributed to the richness of the older club-goers' club-based social involvement. All these relationships of the older club-goer are components in the social networks in which club-based social capital inhere.

Section III: Network Norms

The horizontal and vertical relationships described above are components of club-based social networks in which social capital is located. Structural features of these networks, such as the extent to which they are diverse (or not, as we saw in Chapter Four), underpin the functioning of these relationships. An aspect of network functioning is the norms – unwritten rules and the social control which enforces them - which exist in networks, and it is these which are the subject of this section. The discussion will focus on two norms – *equality* and *tolerance and inclusiveness*, I will now describe the operation of these two norms in the club context.

Equality

A norm which emerged strongly as characterising the older club-goers' networks is that of equality. This norm reflected a number of unwritten social rules which, when followed (as they almost invariably were) created group cohesion by fostering unity, cooperation and minimising conflict. I will now consider these unwritten rules which I have labelled the 'fair share' rule, the 'don't make a show of yourself' rule, and 'be courteous and polite' rule. Each operated in a different manner to ensure the equality of group members. Members were generally aware of behaviours that were permissible or prohibited by these rules, and applied - or were subject to - the sanctions which enforced them.

The 'Fair Share' Rule

The 'fair share' rule requires that club-goers not take more than their 'fair share'. This is best explained by seeing it in operation - an area in which this was evident is in winning at bingo. Despite the fact that winning is beyond the control of players, to win 'too often' was seen as a violation of this norm, and hence subject to sanctions. This was understood by the players, so that Molly reported that when she won four times in one day: "I was so

embarrassed". Similarly, I observed that when Angela won for the fourth time, when she called "Bingo!", she followed it with a public apology, also yelling "I'm sorry!". Further, it was not uncommon for players to refrain from calling bingo even though they had the full house, in situations where they had already won two or three times. In fact, I did this myself.   I observed a related strategy for avoiding violating the 'fair share' rule which involved sending someone else to collect a bingo prize, and hence it being less obvious that the player had won on multiple occasions.

The 'fair share' rule also translated into 'not taking more than your fair share of the most valued bingo prizes". The bingo hostess, Sharon, told me that when one woman had won three times on the previous day, when she came up to collect her prize, "she took two legs [of lamb], but she wasn't game to take another", and took one of the lesser valued prizes instead. Violation of the 'fair share' rule sometimes resulted in disapproval and signs of annoyance by other players, a reaction which has been noted in other settings (Fallon, 1999; Chapple & Nofziger, 2000; Percival, 2000; O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004).

Luck, too, was often shared. Players sometimes tried to distribute luck fairly amongst themselves and other players. I noted in my fieldnotes, for instance, a bingo player, Rita, saying at one point: "I'm facing the door, so I'm going to win". Rita then added that everyone at the table was likely to win because she herself was facing the door. This is not just an expression of Rita's beliefs about the mechanics of luck, but may also be an expression of her desire to permit others to share in her luck.

Another indication of the operation of the 'fair share' rule is the way that bingo players clearly understood that it was unacceptable to try to claim a seat being minded by a bingo marker. To intrude on a "preserve" in this way would be a violation of this rule, since it would be taking more than "others feel is his due" (Goffman, 1971 p.51). The fact that it is acceptable to mind seats, even large numbers of them, however, appears to be a rule violation, insofar as minding large numbers of seats might be seen as taking more than one's due[125].

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[125] I cannot explain this apparent contradiction, other than to note that minding many seats may only be acceptable if done by *particular individuals*, and may not have been acceptable in others. I have no data which bears on this.

The 'Don't Make a Show of Yourself' Rule

Another unwritten social rule, closely related to the 'fair share' rule, and which also reflects the norm of equality, can be described as the 'don't make a show of yourself' rule. I found that group members were generally expected not to distinguish themselves from the group as far as possible. The operation of this rule was in evidence in the way that almost complete silence was maintained during bingo games and interrupters faced heavy sanctions. On one occasion, when calling recommenced after a short between-game break, one player called out "Hold it!" to the bingo caller, which elicited loud sounds of disapproval from the other players. On another, a woman at my table showed her disapproval of continued talking by shifting in her seat, and saying, sotto voce, "mutter, mutter". Other actions which distinguished individuals from the group were also frowned upon, such as talking on a mobile phone during games, as did arriving late or leaving early.

The 'Be Courteous and Polite' Rule

Related to the 'don't make a show of yourself' rule is the rule requiring courtesy and politeness. One particular bingo player was a regular violator of this rule, and reactions to his violations are a fruitful source of data on the operation of a number of different aspects of the club-based social networks.

Andro is a regular bingo player who, being in his early sixties, is somewhat younger than most of the other players. He has a strong Eastern European accent, and a somewhat severe manner. Andro was quite willing to express his opinion to other bingo players and to the bingo caller. On one occasion, for example, he complained to the bingo caller that the calling was too fast, and I was to find out from him on another occasion that he was concerned about this because he believed that the older players may not be able to keep up. Despite Andro's private goodwill towards other players, his outspokenness was viewed with disapproval by other club-goers, both at bingo and elsewhere, where he was referred to by several interviewees, in addition to during conversation at bingo.

Unease about Andro was not always easy for respondents to pin down, however. Pauline says: "there's only one man over there that rubs a lot of people up the wrong way, but I don't know why", while Eileen tries to explain: "I think because his attitude, his sort of, um, he's more boisterous about things, but, I don't think he's harmful in any way", and Peggy says: "He's the only one that really annoys me and I don't know him from Adam!" Andro's rule violation is made most explicit in Joy's assessment: "I don't like him …he's surly, no sense of humour. At this table you've got to have a sense of humour". By being

"talkative", "bad tempered", "boisterous", "surly" and lacking a "sense of humour", Andro violates the rule that requires maintaining courtesy and politeness.

Interestingly, despite this general intolerance of Andro, I observed that he was subject to few sanctions but rather only a general coolness from table-mates. This is despite the fact that many would have preferred not to have to share a table with him; Peggy says: "People sort of don't want to sit, don't want him to sit there". This apparent contradiction may be explained by the operation of the 'live and let live' rule which is discussed in the next section.

The specific unwritten rules mentioned here – 'fair share', 'don't make a show of yourself' and 'be courteous and polite' - operate to maximise equality of individuals. In so doing, the norm of *equality* functions to minimise conflict and thereby create social harmony and cohesiveness.

Tolerance and Inclusiveness

The second of the two norms to be discussed in this section is *tolerance and inclusiveness*. This was in evidence in the operation of an unwritten rule I am calling the 'live and let live' rule, as well as in the generally inclusive nature of networks in action.

The 'Live and Let Live' Rule

The norm of *tolerance and inclusiveness* was promoted by the 'live and let live' rule which operated to minimise harsh sanctioning of violators of the equality rules, and was manifest in a general tolerance of others. Although akin to the notion of tolerance, 'live and let live' has a stronger connotation in that it involved, at times, active encouragement of others to pursue courses of action which might be judged by others as unacceptable. An instance of the operation of this rule was when I won bingo and chose a meat-tray to give to a family member rather than to keep for myself. When I told the bingo hostess that this was my intention, she said to me solicitously "Don't you want something for yourself?" Her question suggested to me an ethic in which some degree of self-indulgence was acceptable, perhaps actively encouraged, at the club. This was also in evidence in the talk of the older club-goers themselves. On one occasion, two women with whom I was talking observed Agatha going to the bar to buy a drink. One of them commented sympathetically on how much weight Agatha had put on, and observed that she was buying alcohol at the bar. Her

companion said, also sympathetically, "Why not, it probably makes her feel better, I'll have one myself – later - with lunch".

It is not always clear where this rule begins and ends, though, as is indicated in the following extract concerning the unusual occurrence of a visit by a younger bingo player with a small baby.

> Phyllis was concerned that there was a baby in the room and said that "it'll have to keep quiet". … The baby woke and made noises which was met by a lot of shushing. Although there was a sense of disapproval when the baby made noise, there was also some positive sounds when the baby made a noise at exactly the time that Adam was calling the first number of a game. I found the general reaction quite paradoxical. On the one hand was this strong expectation that the baby not disturb the game, and on the other, the kind of indulgence that you might expect of a grandparent. (fieldnote 6).

This reaction may reflect, once again, a conflict between norms - the norm of equality (requiring the mother to have a quiet baby) vis-a-vis the norm of tolerance and inclusiveness (requiring acceptance of the baby). Alternatively, there may be a more straightforward conflict with the imperative to have silence in order to hear the bingo numbers being called.

Personal Responsibility

It follows from the 'live and let live' rule that club-goers were reasonably free to act in a way of their own choosing (although at the same time, negotiating action which is consistent with the equality rules). The flipside of this, however, is that they were expected to take personal responsibility for their actions and any negative consequences. This included gambling behaviour, which some older club-goers saw as being an issue of personal responsibility, rather than the club's corporate responsibility. Pauline told me:

> There isn't anyone holding a gun at your head saying you've got to do this or play that machine or do that, now, is there? (Pauline interview)

Peggy held remarkably similar views:

> If you're at all weak-willed you can't blame the club, because they do not hold a gun to your head in any shape or form (Peggy interview)

Inclusiveness of Network Interactions

The norm *tolerance and inclusiveness* is also manifest in group interaction.   Inclusive interactions involved members acting in such a way that others were drawn into interaction, rather than being excluded from it. This was the norm at bingo. Interactions at bingo, for example, were characterised by "inclusive intimacy" (Marks, 1998).   In practice, this meant that interaction between table-mates was between any table-members, and was not restricted to sub-groups or pairs of closer friends. When conversations were taking place within a sub-group, it was acceptable for non-participants to listen in. Attempts at private conversation between adjacent pairs were rare, although I sometimes observed it between married couples. It would, however, be an oversimplification to suggest that there were no exclusionary interactions occurring in the club-based social networks.   There was, on occasions, exclusion of particular individuals, such as Andro.   There was, also, some exclusion of particular groups, such as the "Italian Table" which was marginal at bingo.

The norms I have called *equality* and *tolerance and inclusiveness* function to create cohesive groupings of older people within the club, by strengthening relationships and - perhaps most importantly - minimising conflict and imbalances that may interfere with the cohesiveness of these networks. Such solidarity is the basis for the bonds which contribute to social capital.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a descriptive account of older club-goers' relationships and considered how they function to create connections which - as will be discussed in a later chapter - are the basis for the social capital in those networks. An essential element of social capital is gaining access to social networks, and this was described in Section I, *Accessing and Maintaining Social Networks*. The main means by which network access was achieved was by using existing connections of family and friends, while an alternative pathway – associated with instrumental club-use – involved little social network involvement. After initial access, older club-goers' 'club career' tended to progress with the formation of new relationships and changes in existing ones. Club-going also facilitated access to wider social networks, such as those in other clubs.

Social capital inheres in networks consisting of the older club-goer's (horizontal) relationships with friends, family and casual interactants, as well as in the (vertical) relationship with the club in its own right. These relationships were described in Section II

of this chapter entitled *Description of Relationships*. Club-going supported interaction in these relationships so that a range of characteristics important to the positive functioning of relationships could operate, including *contact, reciprocity* and *intimacy*. The networks also possessed norms, described in Section III, *Network Norms*, such as *equality* and *tolerance and inclusiveness* which minimised conflict and helped to build cohesiveness. These relationships - taken in conjunction with the data in the previous chapter – function in such a way that social capital is created.

The social capital that arises from these networks is accessible to the older club-goers to be utilised for a number of purpose, including social support. One purpose for which the social capital can be accessed is for the practical management of everyday life, in order to 'get by' – an outcome of social capital in bonded networks (de Souza Briggs, 1998, Putnam, 2000). The next chapter with consider this in more detail.

CHAPTER 6: THE CLUB AS A RESOURCE FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

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Introduction

This chapter presents data on the ways in which the Langley Club is used by older people as a resource for the management of everyday life. The experience of - and the capacity to manage - everyday life can be affected by the onset of disabling health conditions, death of family and friends, and other events which impact negatively on the older person's personal, social and environmental resources. A consequence is that an older person's ability to maintain what is valued may be compromised. For many older people, a valued goal is to live as independently as possible – that is, without being reliant on others - and to retain personal control over their lives. To achieve this in daily life, older people generally make active use of available resources, including those which are located in social networks (described in Chapter Five) and those (including material resources) which are located in the places and organisations with which they interact. The club is an 'opportunity structure' for this (described in Chapter Four) in which the physical and organisational context makes available such resources.

Section I of this chapter shows that registered club participation enabled older club-goers to access some of the resources needed to maximise self-reliance. Self-reliance was assisted by participating in a club which spatiotemporally embedded them in their local community, and enabled them to access resources needed for activities of daily living and to maintain the 'everyday competence' needed to manage activities of daily living. Section II presents data which show that, in addition to supporting self-reliance, club participation acted as a resource for maintaining self-direction – that is, a sense of autonomy and control. Club-use protected the older club-goer from experiencing a loss of control, provided the opportunity to exercise choice, to maintain equality in relationships and to experience enjoyment, pleasure, fun and excitement.

Section I: Self-reliance

This section describes how club participation enabled older club-goers to manage everyday life in a way that minimised reliance on others. Being easily accessible in the local community, the club helped to order older users' everyday use of space and time. Participation facilitated the management of limited financial resources, and access to affordable resources for daily living such as food. In addition, club use contributed to the older person's everyday competence which is necessary for the effective management of daily life.

The Club in the Spatiotemporal Ordering of Everyday Life

How everyday life is experienced - the "ordinary rhythms of daily living" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p.3) - is fundamentally shaped by how daily life is located, spatially and temporally. At the same time, remaining self-reliant depends upon aspects of the older person's spatial and temporal context. Being locally embedded is very important in later life (Wahl & Weisman, 2003; Kendig, 2003), as is the way in which time is experienced and utilised (Godfrey et al., 2004). The club embedded older club-goers in these ways, facilitating self-reliance.

Locality and the Club

The Langley Club was used by older club-goers as an everyday part of the activities and interactions in which they engaged in the neighbourhood. The locally embedded nature of the club was indicated by the widespread use by club-goers of terms such as "pop in", "call in", "drop in" and "handy" to describe club-use. Mary says "people that don't like going out by themselves just go up, pop up the club there". Maurie also appreciated being able to "pop in" as he goes about his everyday activities:

> We went shopping and invariably, if it's a very hot day, you pop in for a
> cold beer (Maurie interview)

Olive can "pop in" because the club is a short walk away across a park from her home. It is also local for her friend:

> I often pop in for a <u>coffee</u> or a sandwich and then one of my friends that
> <u>lives</u> at Saw Road, she often meets me down there for lunch or afternoon
> tea (Olive interview)

Being "handy", for Eileen, is about not only proximity to home, but accessibility, specifically the ease of parking: "Its very, very handy, very close to home, parking". Talking about a nearby club, Lil says: "If I go there, I can't get home. Here there's a bus at the door".   For these people, then, it seems that the Langley Club is integrated into their local community and their everyday lives.

Structuring Time

Older people made use of their club-going to structure time, both at the level of the day and of the week. Some club-goers saw a need to create structure in their day. Eileen observed this in her mother, Ruby, commenting: "Mum's very much into sort of doing things at the same time every day". Attending activities at the club which commence at a particular time, as did bingo, poker machine promotions and sub-club activities, constrained how time is used on that day. The morning bingo game, which lasted two hours, structured Mary's entire day:

> I get up at seven o'clock, because it takes me roundabout two hours to
> get ready. Takes me ages to get a shower and get dressed, make the bed
> and then come and get my breakfast. …I leave here roundabout nine,
> ….by the time I walk up there, I might have five minutes, ten minutes to
> wait for a taxi. (Mary interview)

When Mary got home she did not leave again that day: "I never start out of here after I come back from the – bingo". Lil, who attended bingo regularly with her husband, Merv, alluded to how the club helped to structure the day: "If you go to the club, you have to get dressed in the morning".

Maurie used his previous work-day routine as a template for structuring his day in retirement - "You still get up at the same time every morning because you're used to it, you know?" - and visits to various clubs were built into his routines. A similar process was noted by Rubinstein (1986) who found that for many of the retired men in his study, the "basic structure" of the weekday workday was replicated in retirement, although it was generally modified for various ends (p.18).

Club-use also structured time at the level of the week. Many club activities occurred weekly on a particular day, and many regular attendees of an event structured their weeks around it. Grace, for example, who I met one Tuesday in the foyer of the club, told me how she played bingo at a bowling club near her home on Thursdays. The other two

weekdays she got the bus to one or other of two shopping centres "to shop, wander around and sometimes have a bit of lunch… I sometimes don't get home until about three o'clock". On Saturday she did her washing and on Sunday she cleaned the flat. I commented that she is busy and she said "Well, I'm on my own. I've got a one-bedroom flat, Housing Commission". For Grace, then, club-going was part of an established weekly routine which may be a response to managing time now that she is "on her own"[126].

As well as creating a weekly routine, club-going helped to *pace* the week. Mary was careful to pace herself, because having too much "entertainment" worsened her medical condition:

> I go Monday and Tuesday and then Wednesday and Thursday I have a rest. ... and then Friday I go to the Langley Adult Day Group... and Saturday and Sunday I'm at home (Mary interview)

Myra structured her time so that she had some days at home and some days out, including visiting the club. When I asked her whether she came to the club most days of the week, she replied:

> God no! I don't believe in going out every day. I know there's a lot of women who go out <u>every</u> day, but, to me, I think: "Well, you've got a <u>home</u>" (Myra interview)

A weekly routine is not important for all older people (Russell, 1996), however, and this was true of some of the older club-goers, particularly some of the men. Tom, for example, decided on a day-to-day basis whether or not to go to the club, coming "just when I feel like a walk, …just when I feel like getting dressed".

Access to Resources to Manage Limited Finances

Another aspect of everyday life which is often carefully managed by older people is their financial resources. Many older Langley Club-goers were no longer in the paid workforce and had the age pension as their main source of income. Olive told me:

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[126] She may also be engaging in these regular activities to "get out of the house", particularly since she is living in a small space. "Getting out of the house" is discussed in a later section.

> Well I can <u>keep</u> my head above water, Virginia. I- I mean, I'm <u>not</u>
> wealthy, but I don't <u>owe</u> anybody anything (Olive interview)

Club-goers spoke often about the need to be careful about how they spent money. This was because, for some, what they had to spend was limited, while for others, the concern was more to target their spending to leave financial resources for other, more valued, purposes.

The Affordability (or otherwise) of Club-going

Many goods and services within the club are inexpensive compared with alternatives, largely because they are subsidised by the club's poker machine takings (PC, 1999; IPART, 2007)[127]. Chapter Four has described a number of ways in which prices are kept low – the membership fee is nominal, for example.

The fact that items of value could be obtained as prizes was often spoken about to illustrate the financial benefits of club attendance. Prizes consisted of food products (discussed in more detail in the next section) as well as non-food items, including large items such as cars and holidays. Prizes could be won during raffles, poker machine promotions, bingo or by swiping a membership card through a special machine.

A system of membership points existed at the club which could be utilised to obtain free goods and services, or to obtain them at heavily discounted prices. When members used their membership cards, points accrued which could later be exchanged for goods and attendance at special events. Points were added to the card when food was bought and when poker machines were being used. Peggy described it this way:

> You can buy <u>anything</u>. They've got a <u>lovely</u> gift shop… and when we go
> <u>away</u> [my friend] loves <u>bourbon</u> …and I always buy it there on my <u>points</u>,
> and I buy the chocolates for the [grand]<u>kids</u> … on points …<u>My</u> friend,
> Judy, <u>she's</u> bought herself a <u>lovely</u> new electric <u>jug</u>- <u>kettle</u> - Sunbeam, I
> think. (Peggy interview)

Although some club-goers perceived the points system as being of assistance to them financially, many recognised that there is in fact a cost associated with gaining points.

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[127] Of course, such benefits are negated if a club-goer spends excessive amounts of money on the poker machines.

Attendance at a dinner, for example, was able to be purchased for a certain number of points which required an outlay of forty dollars on the poker machines.

Although club-going had the potential to be an affordable activity, respondents had mixed views on whether or not this was the case. Some pointed to the fact that prices were low in comparison to non-club venues. Tom told me:

> You pay $2.25 for a schooner of beer here which would cost you $3.00 at
> Langley pub …What a difference! You're not going to pay out … that
> up at the pub" (Tom interview)

Peggy made an implicit comparison with alternatives to the club, which pointed to its relative affordability:

> You can walk into that club and not spend a penny, you needn't buy a
> drink, you needn't play the 'pokies'. Just sit by the window or something
> like a -, and read a book or a newspaper in a nice atmosphere - its all air-
> conditioned, cool in summer, warm in winter and no-one is going to
> come up to you, and say, ah, 'wh- you can't stay here, you've got to buy
> a drink, at least'. You can sit there day and night, and if you don't want
> to spend a penny you don't have to. (Peggy interview)

Others, however, saw the club as expensive. Phyllis said of the club food: "for a club, it's a bit dear". There were those who believed that the club was charging prices which were too high for a registered club – or at least, their understanding of a registered club. This was voiced by one older member at an AGM who, when complaining about the food service at the club, said:

> I am, or the members that I come in contact with, looking forward to a
> future time when … the members here would enjoy those things which
> are in keeping with an RSL Club, for example, affordable meals in the
> restaurant (fieldnote 38)

One member told me that she had heard one of the Board members (an older person himself) say that "it's a five-star club so you expect to pay five-star prices". Concern about being charged for bingo, which is often free at other clubs, and being charged for tea and coffee at bingo also reflected this concern. Andro, though in his sixties, told me that

he was concerned that bingo was too expensive compared with other clubs: "They don't help the old people, they rob them".

Managing Costs of Club-Going

There are, however, costs associated with going to the club, which older club-goers appeared to carefully manage. This can be seen in how money was spent at bingo and on the poker machines. Although bingo is, by almost any measure, an inexpensive activity (two dollars to buy the book which lasts the whole session), many bingo players further limited spending. Some achieved this by forgoing the one dollar bottomless cup of tea or coffee, or by leaving the club and returning home before lunchtime to avoid food costs.

Such thrifty behaviour drew criticism from some other club-goers. Peggy, herself a bingo player, says of bingo-players:

> They're <u>not</u> <u>spending</u> in the <u>club</u>. <u>Their</u> <u>prizes</u> they're <u>getting</u> are being <u>supported</u> by the <u>members</u> that <u>do</u> spend a dollar in the club. They're renowned for being <u>lousy</u> (Peggy interview)

Poker machine players were aware of the financial risks involved in playing, particularly the risk posed by poker machine overuse. Thea tempers her account of enjoyment of club activities with "as long as you don't get too involved with the poker machines!". Many club-goers with whom I spoke managed risk by either not playing the poker machines at all, or by using a system to limit spending. Some said that they "never touch" the poker machines. Alice said she had vowed never to play the poker machines since her brother was "ruined" by gambling. I observed the following strategies to manage spending on the poker machines:

- maintaining a discrete fund which is depleted or topped up only through poker machine playing;

- limiting the amount spent in a session to a predetermined amount;

- limiting frequency of play;

- playing only a few lines on a low denomination machine;

- taking rather than replaying winnings; and

- reserving potential spending money for poker machine playing rather than other activities.

The latter strategy was explained by Lil in reference to herself and her husband:

> We don't go to expensive restaurants, or the theatre or anything like that,
>
> so we can afford to spend it on the 'pokies' (fieldnote 33)

Of those that did play the poker machines, most with whom I spoke played recreationally and without adverse financial consequences.

Accessing Resources to Manage Food Acquisition

An area of everyday life which featured strongly in the domain of the everyday life of club-goers was that of *food*. In a range of ways, the club was a resource for older club-goers to manage this significant aspect of everyday life. Eating food is fundamental to daily life. Eating opportunities must be (at least to some extent) planned for, food must be obtained (either to be transformed into a meal, or already prepared) and then consumed. Although eating is as much a "social and cultural practice" (Russell et al., 2001, p.191) as an "instrumental activity of daily living" (Lawton & Brody, 1968), it is this latter aspect I will now consider. This section describes how the club helped older people to acquire food, either by enabling access to basic food stuffs or by providing the opportunity to eat prepared meals at the club. This section on food finishes with a consideration of the cultural relevance of Langley Club food to this particular group of older people.

Obtaining Basics For Food Preparation at Home

This section is about how older club-goers obtained basic foods which were able to be prepared as meals at home. There are two aspects of this to be discussed here. The first is the role of food prizes in obtaining food for later home preparation of meals, and the second is the role of club-going in shopping for the same purpose.

Food as Prizes

Food prizes[128] were an important source of groceries for some of the older club-goers, especially at bingo[129]. I will describe how this occurred at the club. Some club-goers utilised bingo and other prizes to assist them in obtaining basic foods. Ruby described how she and her daughter, Eileen, negotiated to ensure a good balance of foods:

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[128] Clubs are well-known for fundraising activities, which have food-related prizes. A well known example is the "chook raffle" held in many clubs (Levins, 2004), which involves the raffling of an uncooked chicken.

[129] Bingo prizes have long been a source of basic foods (Dulles, 1965 cited in Dixey, 1996).

> Eileen said to me 'Mum if we win don't get a leg of lamb any more, we've got about three in the freezer now. … So, … I got pork chops and steaks, I think on Monday. Tuesday, <u>Eileen</u> won and she got a parcel of groceries. And then I won and I got fruit and veggies (Ruby interview)

Eileen, in a separate interview, talks about the same occasion:

> I think we're <u>almost</u> ready to start <u>getting</u> meat again because, for a <u>while,</u> the freezers were chocka full of meat. I won one, then <u>Mum</u> won one, and then the <u>next</u> day, Mum would win one. So that's <u>quite</u> a bit of meat in two days! (Eileen interview).

Alice often won meat at bingo and was proud of the fact that she had not needed to buy meat for two years. She told me that recently she had walked past her butcher's shop and "popped in and told him" that she had not taken away her custom from him, but that she had not needed to buy meat because she had been wining it at bingo. Alice reported that the butcher was understanding, saying "Good luck to you, keep it up!".

Meat was the most desirable prize. At bingo, and during pokie-promotions, the meat-trays were generally snapped up by winners in preference to the vegetable and grocery trays. Other basic items were also available as prizes. This included fruit trays, and grocery trays which included tea, coffee and biscuits, along with non-food items such as cleaning fluids and toilet paper. The nature of prizes as basic dietary constituents is reflected in the title of a particular promotion, "Bread and Butter" at a nearby club at which, I was told, players stood to win a loaf of bread and half a pound of butter.

Poker machine promotions at the Langley Club included, as prizes, many items to assist in food preparation. I was told:

> If your name's up on the <u>poker</u> <u>machines</u>, they have a table there full of <u>goodies</u>, you know that you can <u>win</u>, and we've won things like a sandwich maker and toasters and, <u>you know</u>, quite <u>good</u> things (Bob interview)

Prizes that I observed during Brunch Bonanza, for example, included a wok steamer and mince grinder. Obtaining food by prizes was seen as being of financial benefit as well. One woman told me, after winning a meat-tray: "Now I don't have to buy Sunday lunch … every little bit helps".

Food prizes were particularly useful for older people for whom shopping was difficult. Mary had a significant mobility impairment and usually came to the club by taxi as she was unable to use public transport. As she was also unable to get to the shops on her own, she was taken fortnightly by a Home Care worker. Mary supplements her shopping with bingo prizes. I observed the strategic way in which she did this; on arrival at bingo, Mary surveyed the prizes to see what she needed, and then if she won, she would ask for her choice, if still available, to be brought to her table.

Obtaining food in the way of prizes had elements in common with, as it were, 'hunting and gathering' natural resources. On one occasion, I heard the comment at bingo about a player who had just won a meat-tray: "She can sleep in tomorrow, she won't need to come". The use of "need" points to the work-like nature of winning food prizes. My own experience on one occasion attests to this. When I won a small prize of pasta and pasta sauce at Bingo, I decided to take it home and use it to feed family members that lunchtime. At that time, I felt a strong sense of satisfaction, and a vague analogy came to mind; winning this prize was like fishing and successfully catching something for lunch.

Not only is getting food a type of work, but it is women's work. It is consistent with the fact that women have traditionally been - and still largely are - responsible for preparing, cooking and serving food (Sidenvall et al., 2000) that prizes at (female-dominated) bingo are almost exclusively food-related. The behaviour of male bingo players reflected this as well, as the married men often deferred to their wives in choosing prizes. Marco, for example, attended a number of different clubs at the request of his wife, to ensure that he brings home a wide variety of food.

Obtaining Basic Household Food Items

Club-going also assisted club-goers to obtain basic foods for meal preparation at home by making shopping more convenient. Shopping and club-going often became part of a single outing. Many club-goers combined a visit to the club with doing the weekly shopping at the nearby supermarket, or with picking up daily necessities, such as milk and bread. Lil, for example, shopped at the supermarket after bingo while her husband, Merv, bet on the horses at the club. Despite the fact that grocery shopping is generally women's work, this was not always the case. A woman I observed in the Lounge, whom I called "Pink", played the poker machines while her husband shopped at the nearby supermarket. Tom, who has lived alone in a self-care unit of a retirement village since his wife died twenty

years ago, usually "picked up a few things" on his way to the club. He explains this to me, when I ask him if he cooks for himself:

> *Tom:* Yes, <u>whatever</u> cooking I <u>do</u>. It's <u>not</u> much … <u>I</u> generally get a few <u>bananas</u>. I've got a <u>few</u> in my bag down there … they're a good stand-by. And … I get a <u>capsicum</u> now and again - cut a <u>slice</u> out of that.
>
> *Virginia*: Do you cook a <u>chop</u> up and some <u>sausages</u> or something?
>
> *Tom:*   Ah, bit of <u>chocolate</u>. I <u>love</u> something to <u>eat</u>. I generally get <u>whole</u>meal bread - that <u>nine grain</u> stuff. (Tom interview)

One of Tom's regular dinners consisted of instant noodles "with a bit of vegemite and some garlic". Tom's food preparation is assisted by his regular visits to the club during which he is able to purchase ingredients for his basic home-cooked meals.

Eating at the Club

The Club helped in food acquisition by enabling meals to be consumed at the club. Many older club-goers, though not all, saw the food provided by the club as being good value for money; that is, being of good quality or quantity for a reasonable price. The quality and affordability of the food was sometimes given as the main reason for attending particular clubs: Maurie said:

> Most of them have very good bistros and restaurants … the meals are
> very reasonably priced, but not only that, but the quality of food's good
> as well (Maurie interview)

An elderly man who lives with his wife in a retirement village saw the food as an aspect of the Club's appeal: "We find it very handy. We get good meals …". Olive told me approvingly that the club did not "skimp" on sandwich fillings. Some, but not all, club-goers were impressed with the quality of the food as well. There were others, however, who felt the quality of the food was generally poor.

Tom, as well as purchasing food at a nearby supermarket to take home to prepare an evening meal, often has lunch when he is "out and about". These - often more substantial - meals helped him to balance the rudimentary evening meals he prepared for himself.

> *Virginia:* What do you do for <u>lunches</u>?
>
> *Tom:* <u>Lunches</u> -, <u>anything</u> I might fancy. Got a <u>pie</u> the other day.

> *Virginia*: Do you get <u>home</u> for lunch or do you <u>stay</u> out and about?
>
> *Tom:* I <u>stay</u> out and about … I <u>might</u> get a pie today here. They are not <u>bad</u> pies here (Tom interview)

Being able to get a good meal at the club was particularly important for older male club-goers who did not cook. Merv, in talking about a friend who regularly ate his evening meals at the club, commented that "you don't have to cook. He lives on his own". This suggests that had Merv's friend had a wife, he may have had meals prepared for him, but as he is "on his own" meals are not as easily available.

Cultural Appropriateness of Club Food

A further aspect of food at the club is the extent to which the Langley Club food was of cultural relevance to this particular group of older people. The most desirable food for the older club-goers – whether in the form of prizes or to be eaten at the club – were those which were the constituents of the 'proper meal' (Howarth, 1993; Murcott, 1995). Club-goers generally attempted to obtain these foods. Meat was undoubtedly the most valued prize[130]. By obtaining meat and then, if possible, basic vegies such as potatoes and greens, the older club-goer had the constituents of a 'proper meal'. The leg of lamb was often chosen so that the bingo player could produce a "Sunday roast"[131].   In the context of eating meals at the club, once again "proper meals" appear to be preferred by the older club-user. The older members preferred the Brasserie to the Café (which served pasta, focaccia and so on), because the former provided a straightforward meat and three vegetable lunch.

The preference for simple foods which are more culturally comfortable was illustrated in an exchange that took place between an older female club member and the club's General Manager at an AGM. The agenda item was a proposed renovation to one of the club's food service areas. The General Manager described the club's elaborate plans for a range of exotic foods to be made available, and it seemed that more basic foods may have been removed. Although I was unable to hear the beginning of the woman's sentence, it ended with "…the lowly sandwich". The General Manager appeared nonplussed, asking the woman, "What's that?". The woman repeated the last part of her sentence, "The Lowly

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[130] Meat is a "high status" food (Charles & Kerr, 1988).

[131] The Sunday Roast is the "epitome of the 'proper' meal" (Howarth, 1993, p.67)

Sandwich".   The general manager was silent for a moment, clearly mystified by her question, and finally responded: "Yes, all those things will be available".   Unsatisfied, the questioner elaborated on her concerns, but I could not hear the content of her message, other than, at one point: "People of our age…"   The general manager responds again, using expressions such as "fresh food attitude", "see hear smell and select", and "concept". The questioner then gave up, presumably realising that the perspective of the General Manager and her own perspective were so different that it would be pointless to proceed.

Maintaining 'Everyday Competence'

Club participation was found to play a role in assisting older club-goers to maintain their capacity to manage everyday life, or their 'everyday competence' (Diehl, 1998).   I first became aware of this role of club-going when I was told by several bingo players that they played bingo to keep mentally active.   Beyond that, it can be seen that there are benefits for competence in addition to those from playing bingo.   There were a wide range of ways in which club-going contributed to everyday competence.   I will discuss this in relation to two types of 'competence': physical and cognitive.   I will focus largely on cognitive competence, after briefly addressing the means by which club participation assists in the maintenance of physical competence.

Maintaining Physical Competence

Club-use can be seen to help in maintaining physical functioning, although the extent of that assistance is probably somewhat limited.   This worked by providing at least a minimal degree of physical activity for club-goers generally, and somewhat more physical activity for those involved in sporting activities.   The majority of the older people with whom I spoke at the club had some form of restriction due to disability, or at least identified some deterioration in their general health, or "slowing down".   I observed, for example, several older people in wheelchairs at the club, including playing poker machines, and there were always walking frames parked at bingo, and sometimes at the end of banks of poker machines.

Club-goers who participated in club-related physical activities, such as sports, are likely to be maintaining or improving their physical mobility, and warding off functional disability. The majority of older club-goers, however, were not involved in club sports, and for these people it is possible that, by taking part in activities which require a minimal level of mobility, they are motivated to maintain function, in order to continue participation, a

process described by O'Brien Cousins, Witcher & Moodie, 2002). Active use of the club by older people for the purpose of maintaining physical competence was clearly limited, however. Older members showed little interest in health promotion information provided by the club. For example, a talk on arthritis management, held in the Atrium, was attended by only six people, two of whom were older. Similarly, older people appeared to be under-represented amongst users of the Health Club.

Maintaining Cognitive Competence

Club participation assisted in the maintenance of "cognitive competence" (Willis, 1996) - a fact which was pointed out to me by several club-goers. I will focus this discussion on bingo and poker machine playing, and consider how both games were seen by some club-goers to have cognitive benefits. I will then analyse these games to show that in fact both require varying degrees of skill, and are often played in such a way that players voluntarily increase the level of skill required. I will conclude by describing how a range of behaviours associated with acquiring and manipulating *luck*, as well as interpreting the operation of luck, involved a significant degree of cognitive processing.

Some Club Activities are Seen as Good for Competence

Bingo players indicated, in a number of ways, that they saw bingo as of benefit in maintaining cognitive abilities[132]. It was seen as keeping players mentally alert, warding off dementia, and assisting people who were already cognitively compromised. The cognitive benefit of bingo playing was sometimes given as the main reason for attending bingo. I was told "It makes you keep your wits about you", and Jill illustrates this well when she told me several times that bingo-playing "keeps your brain alive". Eileen saw bingo's potential to ward off dementia:

> Gives you a bit of <u>exercise</u>, with your <u>brain</u> and your <u>mind</u> and your <u>eyes</u>
> and everything, … and I notice in the paper that as you get older … you
> do need …something like <u>that</u>, just sort of stimulating your brain a bit
> (Eileen interview)

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[132] Maintaining cognitive competence was not mentioned as a reason for playing the poker machines, but there is some support in other studies that some players see this as a factor in their playing (Lynch, 1990; Berry, Fraehlich & Toderian, 2002).

Another woman told me that, when someone commented to her that she must be bored if she chooses to go to bingo, she told them that "bingo must be good for you or why would they play it in nursing homes?" Some players identified a specific purpose in maintaining cognitive competence (through bingo), including being able to add numbers quickly at the supermarket. I will now consider some of the features of these activities that may underlie those cognitive benefits.

Skill Requirements of Some Club Activities

Playing bingo and the poker machines involved the development and continuing use of skills which require cognitive processing. I will discuss this firstly in relation to bingo, then in relation to the poker machines.

The data indicates that bingo is an activity requiring skills which need to be actively *learned.* The learning involved is referred to by Eileen when she talks about "getting used to" playing:

> You <u>can</u> get <u>used</u> to these things… It really gives … your brain a <u>good</u>
> <u>quick</u> working out, just by <u>looking</u> and sort of putting it <u>down</u> in time
> (Eileen interview)

Another indication is that *practice* is required to obtain good bingo skills (Reitz, 2004); this was observed by players, and by myself. Finally, the clear *difference in abilities* between novices and experts points to skill development. A young woman playing for the first time complained that she could not keep up with the caller, saying: "How do the old people do it?". At the other end of the scale are experienced players who appear to play effortlessly, never missing a number, recalling past numbers, and so on. Experienced players are able to think about other things while playing, which is virtually impossible for the new player: on one occasion, for example, a bingo-player was part-way through telling me about an overseas trip when calling re-started, interrupting herself with "I'll finish in a minute". When the game was over, she recommenced her story exactly where she had left off, with, "Anyway…".

Poker machine playing also requires some skill acquisition. Once mastered, basic operation of the poker machines is easy. However, depending on the particular machine, determining *how* to play is skilful. The difficulty in mastering the poker machines is pointed out by Pauline. She would like to play the poker machines but does not because she *can* not:

> a lady tried to show me ..., she said it's like a computer … but I don't
> know anything about computers. I haven't got anything against poker
> machines, truly, but I don't know <u>how</u> to play (Pauline interview)

The club's General Manager also saw it as difficult, saying: "I don't know how they do it, especially the oldies".

Voluntarily Increasing Skill Requirements

This section addresses the ways in which players went beyond the skills required to play the basic game and modified it in such a way that the game was likely to be of greater benefit for cognitive competence. This was the case in both bingo and poker machines, and I will discuss the poker machines first.

Once mastered, basic poker machine operation requires little skill. However, many players went beyond the basic operation, and played in a more active manner. For some poker machine players, playing is an –

> active experience involving use of the mind, attention to combinations,
> concentration, and an on-going chain of decisions (Lynch, 1990, p.198)

Decisions requiring mental processing include deciding how many "lines" to play, how much to bet, and whether or not to re-use credit from a win. I observed players determining in advance which combinations were required for a jackpot, and analysing results to see whether they qualified - and it was clear that they were directing a great deal of attention to these tasks.

Bingo offers a plethora of opportunities for cognitive processing beyond those required to play the basic game. I observed that many players were engaging in complex analyses of individual bingo games (such as being aware of the spatial layout of the numbers on a bingo sheet; counting the number of calls before bingo is declared and comparing the number required to previous games)[133], as well as analysing the relationship between games during the one bingo session and games from previous weeks, months and sometimes years.

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[133] Bingo players have been described as "anything but passive. In fact, an outsider might very well view their activities as work, skillful work at that" (King, 1990, p.58).

Controlling Outcomes

Another aspect of bingo and poker machine playing with likely implications for cognitive competence is the way that players employed strategies in an attempt to control a game's outcome, either directly, or through "controlling" their luck.

The Illusion of Control

Attempting to control outcomes involves, at times, quite sophisticated processing. The "illusion of control" (Langer, 1975) "occurs when people react to certain chance events as if they were at least partially controllable" (Burger, 1991, p.197) - in an effort to influence the outcome of chance events. The "need for competence" may underlie people's desire to "beat the odds" by attempting to "control the seemingly uncontrollable" (Langer, 1975, p.323). I will now look at attempts at controlling outcomes as observed at bingo and the poker machines.

Bingo is a game of chance, and there is "virtually nothing" about bingo which encourages the illusion of control (Burger, 1991, p.201). I did, however, note some behaviour intended to control the outcome of the game by this means. I observed one player, when bingo books were being distributed, asking to receive her bingo book from the middle of the pile, which suggests that she may have believed that she could control which book she received, and hence get a book more likely to win.

The operation of the illusion of control in the context of poker machine playing has been extensively studied (Dowling, Smith & Thomas, 2005), and will be briefly considered here only for the extent to which it involves cognitive processing. Although many players were fully aware that they could not influence the machines (Olive says "it really is a mug's game, isn't it?"), others believed that they could. Many of the instances of such behaviour I observed required quite sophisticated mental processing, including remembering details for an extended time. Julia told me, in response to my question about why she preferred "her" machine, that it was her favourite "because I won using it last Wednesday", an observation which required keeping track of a number of things.

These brief examples point to the role of cognitive processes in attempting to control the outcome of games. A more substantial effort was observed in attempts to influence luck, and I will now turn to this.

Luck And Superstitious Behaviours

Engaging in activities intended to influence luck can be seen to have benefits for cognitive performance[134] and were an important feature of bingo action and interaction. Bingo players have been found to engage in "profound material and psychological efforts" to influence outcomes (Maclure et al., 2006, p.171); the system of beliefs and behaviours around luck at bingo was extensive, intricate and directed at this end. The main cognitive benefits of the superstitious behaviour which I observed at bingo appear to derive from the necessity to monitor progress of a bingo game, detect what "worked" when bingo was won, and to be able to recall the latter in order to act to improve luck on a future occasion.

The player must determine which of all the possible factors present at the time of a win were the causally "effective" ones. William, for example, attributed his win the previous day to the table at which he had been sitting. Players discussed patterns of luck at the table – whether it was moving clockwise or anticlockwise, skipping or jumping. Such monitoring and detection required a degree of vigilance – it seemed to me that being a "good" player required being alert to these aspects of the situation. Some bingo "rituals" (Chapple & Nofziger, 2000) were quite complex. I was told, for example, that I could improve my luck by wrapping a coin in red paper and putting it in the pot-plant near the front door of my house. Many of these more complex rituals were passed around by word of mouth. Rituals involving objects, including bingo markers, were common and observed by other researchers (Chapple & Nofziger, 2000; King, 1990; O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004) as well as myself, as was the use of lucky charms (O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004).

Having noticed what "worked" during previous games, it was also necessary to recall these relevant states or actions in the context of the current game, and make a decision about when to implement them. This extract from my fieldnotes illustrates the intricacies of deciding when to act:

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[134] Attempts by poker machine players to influence their luck did not emerge in this study. Most poker machine-related superstitious behaviours observed were rather directed at influencing the machine directly and hence the outcome, that is the illusion of control. Given that there is a great deal of research indicating that attempts to influence luck are an important feature of poker machine playing, particularly by problem gamblers (Joukhader, Blaszczynski & Maccallum, 2004), the question arises why this did not emerge in this research. As this was not an area I was initially intending to address, I did not raise it in interviews (nor was it raised by the interviewees) and neither did it arise in general conversation.

> Jill spoke across the table to Julia: *"You'd better do it, it's getting late"*,
> turning her book over a couple of times to indicate what she was talking
> about. Julia said "not yet" or words to that effect, but soon afterwards
> started turning her book face up then down repeatedly while saying a
> ditty starting with "eeny meeny miney mo" (fieldnote 29)

Everyday competence, in the form of physical and cognitive competence, was supported
by club involvement. Club-going by older people seemed to have limited benefits for
physical competence, but cognitive competence seems to have been enhanced by a range
of activities associated with bingo and poker machine playing. In maintaining everyday
competence, club-goers maintained their capacity to remain self-reliant.

Self-reliance in the conduct of everyday life is desired by many older people. This
research has found that club-going enabled older members to access the resources needed
to maximise self-reliance in several ways. In addition to assisting in maintaining everyday
competence as just described, club participation helped to manage limited financial
resources and to manage food acquisition. In addition, club-use functioned to embed the
person in their local community.

Section II: Self-direction

The quality of older people's lives, and the quality of their everyday lives in particular, is
enhanced by experiencing the self as autonomous[135] and self-directing (Sixsmith, 1986a;
Russell, 1995b). Later life can be a time when threats to autonomy - such as age-based
social exclusion - are very real. Some older club-goers identified a degree to which they
were socially marginalised[136], while others were less concerned. Tom is quite clear that
older people are not accepted into the mainstream of society:

> *Tom:* When you get to 80 - anyway, your <u>man</u> passes <u>seventy</u> becomes a
> fossilised <u>bone-head</u> anyway.

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[135] I am not assuming that "autonomy" (in the sense of to "detach oneself from others and be self-
sufficient") is an outcome universally desired by older people, as it is culturally variable (Wray, 2004, p.23).
The sense in which it is being used here is consistent with the data gathered in the largely Anglo-Celtic
cultural context of this particular study.

[136] Marginalisation of older people within the club has already been discussed in Chapter 4.

Virginia: That's what people <u>think</u> of you, you think?

Tom: [pause as he seems not to have heard the question] <u>They</u> don't, <u>they</u> don't keep much of the - <u>they</u> - <u>they</u> don't want to be <u>lumbered</u> with old people.

Virginia: No…

Tom: Oh, you can't <u>blame</u> them, in a way.

Virginia: Why's that?

Tom: Mmm?

Virginia: Do you think it is fair enough do you?

Tom: Well... You've <u>had</u> your life, and that's <u>it</u>. (Tom interview)

Olive, in contrast, did not identify a problem:

Virginia: How do you think- do you think old people are treated well in our society?

Olive: Yes, I think so, because there's a lot of <u>help</u> if you <u>want</u> it, isn't there?... Home helps, and meals on wheels and things like that (Olive interview)

Thea also does not identify a problem when she carefully considers my question:

Virginia: Do <u>you</u> think that at <u>your</u> age that you are treated with respect by people? Or are you seen as taken less seriously than when you were younger? That sort of thing?

Thea: Um, I haven't really <u>noticed</u> … To a great degree. Um, I <u>do</u> notice that when you're struggling to get on the bus, its quite good, the kids do some of them don't but most of them do, part and let you get on first. But some of them don't and then their peers say: "Hey! Stand back"… Um, but, um, no, on the whole I haven't found, um, anything changed as I'm ageing (Thea interview)

The possibility of social exclusion alluded to here points to the importance of maintaining, as far as possible, a sense of control and autonomy in everyday life. This section considers the role of club-going in maintaining club-goers' autonomy or self-direction. I will describe four main ways in which club participation contributes to this. Firstly, I consider the means by which club participation protected older club-goers who were experiencing

physical and cognitive decline from experiencing the full force of possible (negative) consequences of that decline. Secondly, club participation enabled older club-goers to exercise choice over the use of time and place. Thirdly, club-going helped to maintain symmetry in relationships which can be threatened in later life, which results in a feeling of indebtedness which is generally experienced as undesirable (Sixsmith, 1986b). Finally, club-going gave older people access to positive experiences, such as pleasure, fun and excitement which feed into a positive sense of self.

Protection and Support for Lowered Competence

By "taking care of" everyday goals and activities, older people may continue to see themselves as "competent and capable" (Zirkel, 1992), which is important for maintaining self-esteem (Richeson & Shelton, 2006). Club-use enabled those with lowered everyday competence to maintain control and achieve successes in ways that might not be possible in other settings. Everyday competence has already been considered in the earlier discussion on maintaining competence (p.190), where the focus was on the role of the club in assisting older club-goers to *maintain* function. In this section, the focus is on *managing reduced competence* – that is, the role of club-use in limiting the lack of fit between the demands of the environment and the competencies of the older club-goer. I will first discuss protection and support provided to people with physical limitations such as poor health or disability, and then discuss support provided for people whose cognitive competence is reduced.

Protection from Lowered Physical Competence

The club offered protection from some of the negative consequences of physical decline, particularly when considered in relation to alternative places and activities. The ways in which the club offered protection were by being relatively accessible, by being a relatively safe environment and by providing a social environment in which many others share similar levels of disability. Despite this, there were limits to how much protection and support was available from the club and from fellow club-goers.

Accessibility

Having continuing access to opportunities for social interaction, despite lowered physical functioning, protects the older club-goer from experiencing a lack of fit between his or her abilities and the demands of the environment (Wahl, 2005). The club's accessibility, the availability of club-provided transport (though now limited since the daytime bus-runs

were cut to reduce costs), and easy access to public transport and parking - were all given as reasons for coming to the club, and are clearly of benefit to the older people who had mobility difficulties.

The accessibility of the club is highlighted in Mary's description of her lack of access in general, which results from her mobility problems:

> I couldn't go down - same as some of them do, and go and look round the
> all the shops and that, I can't walk (Mary interview)

Mary's club use, however, enables access. Despite not being able to "walk" when it comes to shopping, or travelling, she can "walk" for going to the Club. This is implied in her answer, when I asked her:

> *Virginia:* So, what would have to happen to stop you going to the Club?
>
> *Mary:* I don't know - only that I couldn't get there, I couldn't walk or something (Mary interview)

Personal Safety

Another way in which club-going provided support for people with lowered physical competence is by being a relatively safe environment. A consequence of lowered physical competence is increased concern about personal safety, and registered clubs are seen as providing good personal security in comparison to other venues (AIGR, 1999; Brown & Coventry, 1997; ACT Government, 2000). The benefits of the club in terms of personal security were often referred to by club staff and by older club-goers themselves. Lil told me that "a lot of people come here because its safer, - when you're on your own", and that older club-goers need not have "any worries about someone bothering you". This perception that the club is a safe environment is reflected in the way that some club-goers made no effort to secure their belongings during the Brunch Bonanza promotion[137]. The club was seen as safe, particularly when compared with pubs; Maurie contrasts the club with the "rough and ready environment" of a hotel. This is supported by other research which found that, for women in particular, registered clubs were preferred to pubs (Poroch, 1996).

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[137]   Although this lack of security was not unusual at the club, it may have been particularly pronounced as it occurred in the context of a food ritual, which may have created the impression that participants were coming together as friends, and hence could be trusted.

Despite club-goers' perceptions that the club is a safe place, some club-goers were aware of risks to personal safety at the club. Tom had had belongings stolen, and Merv told me: "I saw the meanest thing I ever saw at the old club", and told me about a woman "on a stick" who dropped a cup full of ten cent pieces she had for playing the poker machines. Merv said that when all the coins had been picked up, the cup was only half full. Sharon, the bingo hostess, also had concerns about the personal security of club members. She told me that although the club is "safe and comfortable" for older people, they "shouldn't be" as trusting as they were, although she was reluctant to elaborate on this any further. One older member, Cathy, had been seriously assaulted on the way home from the club one afternoon (although the assailants were not associated with the club).

Limits to Protection and Support

Despite the support available for older people who were experiencing declines in physical abilities, such support is inadequate to support people whose physical competence has reached a certain point. Health and mobility issues may eventually result in no longer being able to participate in a mainstream registered club (Findlay & Cartwright, 2002). This can be illustrated by an example from the data. Bernice was a regular club-goer who attended with her brother, George. Bernice seemed quite physically frail and seemed to have difficulty in keeping up with the calling at bingo. Bernice managed to continue at the club with George's support, who brought her to the Club in his car and helped her to walk around the club. Her friends also assisted her mobility, and helped her to find the numbers at bingo. Over the course of the fieldwork I observed Bernice becoming increasingly frail, until eventually she was no longer attending the club. When I asked George about this, he told me that Bernice stopped coming because "her legs wouldn't hold her up anymore". This indicates that, not surprisingly, there is a limit to the support club-going could provide Bernice, but it is possible that it enabled her to be socially involved for longer than she otherwise would have been.

Protection from Stigma of Disability

Social networks at the club which are homogeneous in age provide a degree of protection against negative consequences of physical decline. These possibilities are minimised in club-based networks since they tend to be age-homogeneous. Older club-goers with disabilities may expect some degree of empathetic understanding from fellow older club-goers, and this is what I found to be quite often the case in interactions at the club. Club-goers were generally non-judgmental of other older club-goers, having a 'live and let live'

approach, including to those with physical disabilities. A similar phenomenon was observed by Cheang (2002) of a group of seniors who met at a fast food restaurant:

> The older adults had formed a group in which members could ''be themselves'' without fear of being judged by traditional, cultural, and societal standards (Cheang, 2002, p.316).

The fact that there are many fellow club-goers who share similar levels of disability suggests that there is a degree of understanding which may not be available in other settings.

Protection from Lowered Cognitive Competence

In addition to the club supporting older people whose physical competence was lowered, it also supports those with lowered cognitive abilities. Club-use protected these older club-goers from experiencing possible negative consequences of their reduced cognitive abilities, by providing support in managing tasks requiring their use. Once again, however, support was limited. I will first give an example of such social protection provided by a staff member, and then by fellow club-goers.

Interactions between older members and staff were very common, and in situations where the older members were affected by a cognitive impairment, staff provided support and assistance. The poker machines promotion host, Stuart, was willing to help David Tate (who appeared to be affected by dementia) and his wife, Helen, while they were at the club. David and Helen were playing the poker machines when David's name was called over the public address system by Stuart to come and collect a promotion prize. Immediately after calling David's name, Stuart added: "Where's Mrs Tate - Helen. Might be able to help him out." Stuart clearly knew the Tates well enough to know that David would not be able to collect his prize and, by quickly calling on Mrs Tate, Stuart protected David (and presumably Helen as well) from any embarrassment which might have resulted had David understood what was happening and tried unsuccessfully to deal with it.

Fellow club-goers also provided support for some people whose cognitive functioning was declining. Bernice who attended the club with her brother, George, seemed to struggle with finding bingo numbers before the next number was called. The other members of the table assisted her. It must be said, however, that such support at bingo was the exception rather than the rule, and it was not uncommon for struggling players to miss numbers

without assistance. It was not clear to me what made the difference between those who received such support and those who did not.

Another way that protection is afforded - which was not observed directly in the data - is the relatively light task demands of some club activities. This was true of bingo and poker machines. With regard to bingo, this was noted by O'Brien Cousins et al. (2002) who concluded that:

> Unwell people, or people with disabilities, play [bingo] because they perceive that, in this game, there is a level playing field where they are equally competitive with people of all ages and walks of life (O'Brien Cousins et al., 2002, p.5)

 Bette could play bingo even though she had an intellectual disability, and David, despite suffering from, what appeared to be, dementia could manage the poker machines, handle money, collect winnings and so on.

Although there was social support for some older club-goers who were cognitively impaired, this support was limited in its scope, as exemplified in an event which occurred at bingo. I was sharing a table with a group of women who seemed to be always together at the club, and I had heard them spoken about as a group of four close friends. At this table was also Bette, a regular at bingo who seemed to have an intellectual disability. Bette usually sat at the same table as the group of four. On this occasion, I made a comment to the table members which indicated that I believed the group to consist of four members. One of them, Donna -

> looked at me significantly, opening her eyes wider in a conspiratorial manner, and said "Five", inclining her head towards Bette who sat next to her, explaining away my "error" by saying that Bette didn't *always* come on Tuesday. I helped her out saying that it was a Tuesday that I had been told about the four friends (fieldnote 11)

Donna was clearly trying to give Bette the impression that she and her friends saw Bette as a member of their group, although she was not considered a member of that group by themselves or by others at bingo. Although the group of four women were willing to assist Bette (and protect her from any hurt she may have experienced had she realised that they

did not count her as one of their group) they were nevertheless unwilling to go as far as counting her as a genuine member of their social group[138].

The availability of protection for both lowered physical and cognitive competence helps affected older club-goers to maintain a sense of autonomy and self-direction, since the possibility of experiencing a loss of control over the self is minimised.

Exercising Choice

An aspect of experiencing the self as autonomous is the exercising of choice in where and how to spend one's time. Options from which to make choices about timing and location of action may be reduced in later life because of functional difficulties, financial constraints and so on. The club itself, and the activities and spaces within it, provided older club-goers with opportunities to exercise choice. I will discuss the ways in which the club offers a choice of where to be, when, and what to do there.

Choice in Where to Be

In later life, life can become more home-centred, and in these circumstances, alternatives to home may be particularly important for older people. The club was seen by some older club-goers as the only alternative to home. Related to this is the role of the club in meeting a perceived need which is exemplified by the commonly-used expression "It gets you out of the house". Many older club-goers perceived few, if any, alternatives to being at home other than attending the club. Pauline, for example, considered and rejected a number of alternatives in response to my question:

> *Virginia:* Are there are no other options - things you could think to do?
>
> *Pauline:* Well, you can't be out in the garden <u>all</u> the time and even if you went in the bus every day to [a shopping centre], that'd soon..... you can only do so much window-shopping." (Pauline interview)

Tom, also, could identify no alternatives.

> *Virginia:* You still <u>come</u> here even though you have had [some personal belongings stolen while at the club]?"

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[138] Limits to the tolerance of the less cognitively competent has been observed by other researchers. It seems that the particular type of disability - whether mental impairment or physical disability - was the "critical factor" in whether or not the disabled person was accepted, and mental impairment was the less accepted of the two (Steinfeld, 1981).

Tom: There is no where <u>else</u> to go.   Where <u>else</u> is there to go? (Tom interview)

In the context of increasing time spent at home and lack of alternatives, people experienced a need to "get out of the house". The club was seen as assisting with this. "Getting out of the house" was given by older Langley Club-goers as a motivation for club participation. On one occasion, I spoke with a woman whom I had seen at bingo. I asked her: "No luck today?", and she replied: "Less to carry… I only get out… I get out, that's the main thing". Phyllis sees the need for people who live alone to "get out of the house". I record: "Phyllis also told me that bingo is very good if you're on your own, because it gets you out of the house", a view shared by Yvonne:

> Most of them are widows or widowers. It gets the elderly out of the house. I suppose I'm elderly myself (fieldnote 9)

Not only did club-goers point to the significance of the club in allowing them to get out of the house, some also saw it as a kind of moral imperative. I noted a conversation with Raha (who spoke little English) after bingo on one occasion:

> I asked her if she came to bingo often. She indicated that she goes to other Clubs as well. She indicated that when she had finished housework, of which there was not a lot she would "sit" and she moved her head nodding around as if looking for something to do, or looking at the four walls, indicating that she would then go out because there was nothing to do. Later she said the same thing again, but added the idea that some people - when they have nothing to do - do nothing, whereas she goes out to the clubs. She said that with evident pride in her solution to her inactivity, and disapproval of those who don't do something about their boredom. (fieldnote 28)

Sharon, the bingo hostess, shared this view on the moral correctness of "getting out of the house", surprising me with her depth of feeling, given her generally indulgent attitude to the older club-goers: "I think the ones who just sit at home, they're just vegetables".

Choice in the Timing of Activities

One of the most salient ways in which club-goers exercised choice was in the use of time. An earlier section has considered the role of the club in the management of time by looking

at how the club was used to create *structure* in the use of time. This section is concerned with how the person uses the club to exercise *choice* in use of time. The club provides choice in both *when* to go to the club and the *timing* of particular activities while at the club. Being able to choose whether or not to go to the Club on any particular day was often referred to by club-goers. Eileen clearly valued this element of choice, saying: "to know that the club's there - if I <u>do</u> want to go out".   Club-goers liked to decide on the basis of circumstances on any one day whether or not to go to the club. On one occasion, Peggy and Clarrie came to the club because the weather was poor, and they did not want to "stay at home, running the heater all day". Peggy says of Clarrie :

> He'd say 'Oh', you know, particularly if it was a bad <u>day</u>, like in the winter, <u>cold</u> and <u>draughty</u> day or something, he'd say: 'we mose[139] well go and play bingo'." (Peggy interview)

I asked Lil if she came every week and she said: "It depends on the weather. If it's like this…" I asked her if she was talking about the cold, and she said that she came to the club when it looked like raining. She said that when the weather was good, her husband, Merv, would say "lovely sunny day so its silly to be inside a club".

Club-goers also exercised choice over how to spend time while inside the club. Peggy described this in relation to poker machine playing:

> If you're <u>having</u> a good <u>run</u> on a machine you might think 'oh, this is good, I won't go <u>home</u> yet'. If you've not had a <u>good</u> <u>day</u>, as you say, you think 'oh I've <u>had</u> this, I'll go home'. You're not <u>bound</u> to anything, <u>really</u>. (Peggy interview)

Maintaining Reciprocity

The autonomy of older club-goers is also supported by the way in which the club was used as a resource for maintaining symmetry in relationships. Feeling a sense of obligation which cannot be fulfilled, or being 'beholden' to others, is seen by many people as a threat to autonomy and independence (Sixsmith, 1986a). Maintaining reciprocity in relationships through, for example, equality of exchange, limits a sense of being beholden to others.

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[139] "mose well" means "may as well".

One way that this played out at the club is in the way that food was used as a resource by older people to maintain equality of relationships with peers and with family.

Older people used meat to prepare meals for other people, and some did not consider it necessary to have meat available if they were not preparing meals for others. Cathy said on one occasion, for example, that she did not choose a meat-tray as a prize because "I'm on my own". Conversely, when Rita won a leg of lamb, she said she would prepare it for dinner the following night and invite her mother for dinner: "I always invite my mother over when we have a roast."

An important function of food prizes won by older club-goers was to equalise intergenerational exchange within families. Many older club-goers gave their prizes, particularly meat-trays, to their daughters to assist them in managing their households, George said "I never buy meat, neither does my daughter". Julia said: "If there's a leg of lamb, I take that and give it to my daughter". Giselle seemed anxious not to seem greedy in keeping meat-trays for herself, a widow, when she has two daughters she can assist; Giselle told me that she won twice last week and I asked her if she had a freezer full of meat. "Oh, no", she said, sounding a little shocked that I should suggest it. "I gave it to my daughters." Some prioritised their gifts on the basis of relative financial need of daughters. William would only give a meat-tray to a particular daughter if he had already given one to his other daughter, who was financially "worse off". Furthermore, using food in this way may have functioned as extending the provider role perhaps particularly important for older men who had previously provided for their families.

The Phenomenology of Club Participation

A theme which emerged during the research was the experiential aspects of day-to-day club involvement, which included enjoyment, pleasure and fun derived from club activities, as well as relaxation and excitement. Furthermore, some activities were intrinsically satisfying and people experienced positive emotions related to the gestalt of the club, referred to by words such as 'atmosphere' and 'ambience'. An aspect of autonomy is being able to "intervene in one's environment" to experience pleasure and other positive affective and experiential states (Higgs et al., 2003). Although often overlooked, these phenomenological aspects of activity are fundamental to the experience of club participation. I will discuss these, starting with enjoyment, pleasure and fun followed by relaxation, excitement, the intrinsic satisfaction of the activities themselves, and finally

covering the experiences which make up a perception of the club's atmosphere and ambience.

Enjoyment, Pleasure and Fun

Enjoyment, pleasure and fun are positive experiences associated with many aspects of club involvement. *Enjoyment* was frequently given as a reason for attending the club in general and certain club activities in particular. Pleasure derived from club involvement was seen as compensating for lost opportunities for pleasure in other areas. Mary, for example, said that the club provided her only pleasure in life:

> See, I can't go on a holiday, I can't go for a day out like the rest of them.
> I have to have a little bit of pleasure (Mary interview)

while Pauline recognised that the club provided opportunities for pleasure in old age:

> If a lady or a man - or a married couple - and they're elderly, if that's
> their enjoyment to go there and play the poker machines, well why <u>down</u>
> them about it? (Pauline interview)

Other club activities such as eating and drinking were also a source of pleasure, as attested to by one participant at a morning tea at which generous-sized scones and fresh cream were being served, who told her companion: "It's the only time I do indulge". Tom derives pleasure from his club-based activities, including smoking, eating and drinking beer:

> If you <u>cut</u> out <u>smoking</u>, God, I don't know <u>what</u> I'd.... that's is all you can
> <u>enjoy</u>, is a <u>smoke</u> and a bit of nice <u>food</u>, and a <u>beer</u>. If you <u>haven't</u> got
> <u>that</u>, what <u>have</u> you got? (Tom interview)

Related to pleasure and enjoyment was the "fun" that was derived from some club activities. Peggy talks about her regular Saturday at the South Rowley Club: "My fun day - what I call, is Saturday. Its my little day to have a bit of fun". Many older bingo players described bingo as "fun", and a "good table" at bingo is one at which people have "plenty of fun". A table counted as "fun" when there was plenty of laughter, or "group glee" (Cheang, 2002 p.304). Playing the poker machines was also seen as a "fun" activity. Thea said that "I enjoy - for the fun of it", and that, on the occasions that she attends the club with her husband and friends:

> We all put our five dollars and we all play the one machine and have a lot
> of fun… and it lasts a couple of hours and we've enjoyed ourselves
> (Thea interview)

Relaxation

Another phenomenological experience of club participation is *relaxation.* The term was used to refer to a number of different experiences associated with club activities. Relaxation referred to calming or physiological slowing, relief from tension, as well as the offset of stress. I will explore some of these to understand this experiential aspect of club use.

Relaxation as a physiological slowing appears to be related to engrossment. This was also noted by a commentator on bingo in the United Kingdom who said that:

> The pleasure of bingo seems to lie in its being an exceptionally relaxing
> occasion. Together you're all engrossed in an activity …. and there's an
> unvarying rhythm to the sessions" (Alexander, 1972, p.602).

Another sense of relaxation associated with the club is related to the relief of tension achieved by visiting the club to escape from an external source of stress (Reitz, 2004; Blaszczynski, 2002; Caldwell, 1985b; O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004), or to wind down after a stressful event. When I ask Myra (who had described difficulties at home on the morning of coming to the club) "did that make you feel better- coming up here?", she responds: "Yes, because I relax, and there were people laughing, and, you know…". Thea uses the club to "wind down" after a difficult visit to her mother in a nursing home. I ask her *"So you come here afterwards to wind down a bit…"* Thea says*:*

> Yes! Just to sort of - I mean, I do my crossword, and I just have a coffee,
> and just try and forget about the - the - that sort of tension that builds up,
> you know, you just feel a bit guilty that she's there, and you think, that I
> couldn't <u>care</u> for her (Thea interview)

"Relaxation" was also achieved through a break from the general stressors of everyday life, rather than particular problems. As Maurie puts it:

> You go and have a meal, and you're … in good form, you're relaxed
> …come in and have a flutter on the poker machines. … No pressure - let
> your hair down, relax, you know?" (Maurie interview)

I experienced a similar sense of relaxation when, on one occasion, I was sitting on the verandah of the club, having a coffee, recording that the scene is "peaceful and relaxed, it's warm and I can hear the cicadas". The final sense of *relaxation* found in the data is related to the offset of stress which has built up as a result of being "one-off" at bingo. I observed the way bingo players would physically let go of their muscles which had been visibly tense, sit back in their chairs, and sometimes breath a sigh of (tension) relief.

Excitement

Some club members derived pleasure from the *excitement* of particular club activities. The relaxation just referred to is preceded by a build-up of tension which is experienced as excitement.   In this research, excitement was associated largely with bingo and poker machine playing. Excitement, as autonomic arousal, is associated with the prospect of winning at gambling (Sharpe, 2004), and this is true of excitement at bingo and the poker machines. I'll first talk about bingo and then about the poker machines.

The main source of excitement at bingo was the situation where the player is waiting for one or two numbers to win bingo[140]. At the Langley Club, this state is referred to as being "one-off"[141]. Eileen describes the excitement of being "one-off":

> Because I <u>do</u> enjoy ... a little bit of <u>excitement</u>. …'Oh [sharp intake of breath] gonna win', you know? (Eileen interview)

Eileen alludes to the physiological process which accompanies her excitement, an increase in heart rate:

> You think 'oh I'm going to win!' your heart goes [imitates thumping heart]! Goody, goody, goody! (Eileen interview)

Other players, including myself, clearly experienced being two-off in the same way. Lena, for example, told me on one occasion: "When you've got two to go, that's when you get…" Although she did not complete her sentence, she indicated her chest area with her

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[140] The researchers in Dixey & Talbot's (1982) seminal study of bingo in the United Kingdom experienced "the tension of waiting on one number" (p.20), and Cousins et al. (2002) observed that "the process of bingo play provided excitement for some elders, offering an adrenalin rush as prospects for winning increase during the final moments of each game" (p.48). This 'adrenalin rush' can be quite extreme since, it has been reported, that heart rate increases from bingo can exceed those of extreme sports such as bungee jumping (Berger, 2001).

[141]   Being one-off has also been referred to as being "set" (Reitz, 2004) or "sweated on" (Fallon, 1999).

hands, suggesting excitement. Another bingo player, George, who was involved in the conversation said: "You get like that, too, do you?".

Poker machine players share with bingo players the possibility of winning, suggesting that poker machine playing, too, may be perceived as exciting. My own experience records the excitement:

> Every spin got me more points. Gosh it was exciting! As the points are accrued the machine shows things happening, eg one, two, three and adds them on top of each other, so that you never know when it's going to stop. Perhaps it will go up to 100? 1,000? 10,000? Not for me, the most I got was 30 - the equivalent of 60c. It's part of the excitement. (fieldnote 21)

The whole atmosphere of the gaming area of the club, and not just the game itself, may contribute to excitement, as observed by Caldwell (1985a):

> Excitement is created, largely by the mixture of sounds: the thump of poker machine handles being pulled[142]; coins thudding into the metal payout trays indicating wins; electronic ditties indicating payouts; and in some clubs the announcement of jackpots over the club's public address system (Caldwell, 1985a, p.262)

Given that the excitement of playing the poker machines helps to make gambling a pleasurable experience (Brown & Coventry, 1997, p.40), it is curious that the older club-goers who played the poker machines did not describe their experience in terms of excitement, nor refer to any physiological reactions to playing. Mary, who had said that she played the poker machines for "pleasure", flatly denied that she found it exciting. I asked her firstly about bingo: "Do you ever find it exciting to win?", and she replied: "No, I never get excited". I then asked her about poker machine playing: "What about playing the poker machines, do you get excited then?". Her reply of a flat "No" was followed by a deliberate silence after which she changed the subject. When reactions to poker machine playing are discussed, references are made to thoughts about the events, rather than experiential elements. This is exemplified by Olive's reply when I ask her what she enjoys about playing the poker machines: "Just the thought that you might be lucky, just that

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[142] Before the introduction of digital technology into poker machines, machines were operated by pulling a handle on the side of the machine.

chance…". This lack of talk about the experience of poker machine playing is consistent with the commonly made observation that poker machine players rarely display emotion while playing (Caldwell, 1985a; Department of Human Services, 2000). One explanation for these observations may lie with players' awareness of poker machine playing as a stigmatised activity (Kimberley, 2005). This awareness is evidenced in the data in the way that subjects frequently addressed what they believed to be community attitudes to poker machine playing - in particular, the perception that it involves addiction. It may be that the older people who played the poker machines did not want to be seen to be deriving pleasure from what they know is a stigmatised activity.

Intrinsic Satisfaction

Another phenomenological aspect of club participation is the intrinsic satisfaction gained from some club activities. Lawton (1983) notes a distinction between "the satisfaction gained from performing an activity and the satisfaction gained from the consequences of having performed the activity" (p.48). Excitement as just discussed was associated with the consequences of bingo, that is, with winning or with the prospect of winning. Players said that they played bingo and the poker machines for pleasure, which points to the likelihood that the *experience* of playing *per se* is desirable in its own right. There is evidence in the data to support this and to provide information on the nature of that intrinsic satisfaction. I will now discuss this evidence.

Playing bingo and poker machines appeared to be a source of intrinsic satisfaction for some players. This interpretation is supported by the distinction often drawn by club-goers between the enjoyment of the game on the one hand, and other possible motivations for playing (such as winning or social interaction) on the other. When I ask Phyllis what she liked about bingo, she replies: "Oh, I don't know, I just like it", and in reply to my next question ("Do you play for the prizes?"), she replies: "No, I just enjoy it". Hazan (1980) suggests that intrinsic satisfaction may have motivated the bingo and cards players from the senior citizens centre in his study, observing that "as the sums of money involved are of no material importance, the pay-off comes in the very act of performing them" (p.143).

Intrinsic satisfaction appears to have been a motivation for some players of bingo and poker machines, and the data sheds some light on which aspects of play were experienced as satisfying. My own experience, recorded in my fieldnotes, sheds some light on this. I note that on one occasion while playing bingo:

> I developed a rhythm which became quite mesmerising. I began to enjoy
> the rhythmic motion of my arm moving across the page, gently dabbing
> the number, back off the page, back on again for the next number
> (fieldnote 1)

I also found poker machine playing to have similar effects, although less often: "It was totally mesmerizing…I think I felt like many of them must feel. Having just had a large club lunch, I had a full stomach, and I was sitting back and relaxing". This is perhaps a type of "engrossment" which involves a "corresponding inattention to the flow of other proximate activities" (Goffman, 1961b). Other players may have shared this experience. Players so often appear unresponsive to their environment (Brown & Coventry, 1997) – a feature of "engrossment" akin to the notion of being in the "zone". This state is associated with intense play during gambling activities involving dissociation (Livingstone, 2005a, p.528). Such engrossment is a source of pleasure for players (Mannell, 1980).

Atmosphere and Ambience

A final aspect of the phenomenology of club participation to be discussed is the experiencing of the club's "atmosphere" or "ambience". For many older club-goers, the club was phenomenologically experienced as a *gestalt*. This is reflected in talk about the club's "ambience" or "atmosphere" – representations of the club which had positive emotional meanings. Myra reported her strong positive reaction on first entering the club:

> I walked in and I thought "Ooh yes, sure". … it <u>does</u> give you a nice
> feeling … it <u>looks</u> good. (Myra interview)

 The perception of *ambience* and *atmosphere*, however, are ultimately reducible to sensory experience, and I will briefly consider how the club's visual appearance, sounds, odours and feel contribute to the *gestalt*.

It is likely that Myra was attracted initially by the visual. On a number of occasions in the interview she refers to the visual appearance of the club: "They're nice clubs. Let's face it, its not a - well <u>look</u> at it… you couldn't say it was drab". Vision is the sense which takes primacy over the others in our awareness (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), yet others, such as smell - responding to the club's home-like cooking smells, cigarette smoke, stale beer; leather upholstery and so on - can elicit strong and immediate emotional reactions and contribute to clubs' "allure" (Bicego, 2002). The club's soundscape also contributes to its atmosphere (Charlton, 1987). Even the sense of touch may play a role in creating the

club's pleasurable "ambience", being experienced as physically "comfortable", 'warm" in winter and "cool" in summer.

The subjective experiential aspects of club participation deserve attention because of the centrality of the experiential in everyday life. Being able to have sufficient control over one's life that such experiences can be achieved is important for autonomy.

A number of aspects of club participation contribute to the club-goer's sense of themselves as an autonomous individual and help them to maintain control over their own lives. These included protection from lowered competence; exercising choice, maintaining symmetry and phenomenological aspects of involvement.

Conclusion

Club participation enabled the older club-goers to access some of the resources needed to maximise their self reliance and their autonomy or self-direction, which are often threatened by changes which occur in later life. Self-reliance was assisted by being a resource for activities of daily living such as managing limited financial resources, managing changes to how time may be experienced and the acquisition of food. Further, club-going helped to maintain the 'everyday competence' needed to manage activities of daily living. Older people also used the club as a resource in maintaining their sense of autonomy and control. Club-use protected the older club-goer from experiencing a loss of control by providing support and protection in the context of diminished physical and cognitive capacities experienced by some club-goers. Further, club-going was a way to exercise choice – fundamental to autonomy – by enabling choice of what to do and when to do it, since the club provides a wide range of activities available at a range of times. The club was a resource for maintaining equality in relationships which can become more difficult in later life because of a loss of capacity to reciprocate. Finally, participating in activities at the club provides enjoyment, pleasure, fun and excitement - aspects of everyday life to which older people may have less access but which are important for experiencing a sense of control.

CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE CLUB CONTEXT – MECHANISMS AND OUTCOMES

Introduction

This study sought to investigate the nature, meaning and role of registered club participation, and addressed the following specific questions: *How do the older club-goers use the club – their activities, interactions, spatiotemporal patterns of use? How do the older people experience and interpret their involvement in the club?,* and *What role does the club play in the broader context of the older club-goer's life?.* As data analysis proceeded, I decided to use *social capital* as an overarching conceptual scheme. The application of a social capital framework to this topic gave rise to two further research objectives: *To identify, for this setting, the mechanisms by which social capital is created* and *To identify outcomes of social capital for the older club-goers.* I will now review the findings of this research.

The Findings chapters of this thesis (Chapters Four to Six) addressed the questions guiding this research, particularly the *nature* of registered club participation. Chapter Four provided information on the club itself and on the participation of its older users. The activities and social action around this participation were described and contextualised by an account of the historical, geographical, socio-demographic and physical setting. Older people made up over three-quarters of the total Langley Club membership, which is in the tens of thousands. The proportion of men and women among older club-goers was approximately equal, and a substantial number of older club-goers were widowed. Older club-users were predominantly working class, and mostly of Anglo-Celtic background. As a physical setting, the club provided a range of spaces in which organised and informal activities could take place, and provided a site for the social action which was central to older club-goers' involvement. These activities involved some older club-goers playing the poker machines, which generally included social interaction with other club-goers. Some older people, especially men, used the Lounge table area, either alone or with a

'mate', to engage in *passing time*, which involved sitting, usually having a beer, and perhaps reading or watching sport on the club's television screens. For many older women at the club, bingo was an important social activity. A great deal of bingo's social interaction functioned to create a strong sense of solidarity amongst group members. A range of spaces was available for club-goers to eat food, and older people ate meals or snacks either on their own, with friends or with family. Sub-club activities included sports such as bowls and swimming, or recreational activities such as cards. Ex-service activities were important for many of the older members.   The older members of the Langley Club, many of whom have been members for decades, have been affected by changes in the club, resulting from an increasingly commercial focus by club management. This change in focus is experienced by some older members as marginalising of themselves and of what is important to them.

Also addressing the research question about the nature of registered club participation, Chapter Five focussed on the older club-goers' relationships which were either enacted at the club or supported in some way by club participation. This chapter was also the main basis for understanding social connectedness outcomes, which will be considered in Section Two of this chapter. Club-based social networks were initially accessed by one of two means. The first involved tapping into existing networks in order to participate in that particular club-based network. The second involved accessing wider social networks which contained club users, in order to gain at least the information necessary to begin club participation. After initial access, the older club-goer's 'club career' tended to progress as new relationships were formed and existing relationships changed. Interaction took place in networks consisting of club-goer's (horizontal) relationships with friends, family and casual interactants, as well as a (vertical) relationship with the club in its own right. A wide range of available activities provided opportunities for the development and maintenance of personal relationships (with kin and non-kin) as well as to engage in casual interaction, including with staff. Club-going supported interaction in these relationships so that a range of characteristics important to the positive functioning of relationships could operate, including *contact, reciprocity* and *intimacy*. Older club-goers participated in networks which were largely homogeneous with respect to age, gender, class and cultural background and did not significantly interact in wider heterogeneous networks at the club. Their networks also possessed norms such as *equality* and *tolerance and inclusiveness* which minimised conflict and helped to build cohesiveness.

Chapter Six reported findings on the use of the club as a resource in the management of everyday life. These results addressed one of the initial research questions - the role of club participation - as well as addressing one of the emergent research questions - the outcomes of club-based social capital - by drawing attention to the club's role in supporting self-reliance and autonomous action. Club participation assisted self-reliance by facilitating the management of limited financial resources, the management of time, and of food acquisition. Further, club-going helped to maintain the 'everyday competence' needed to manage activities of daily living. Older people used the club as a resource in maintaining their sense of autonomy and control. Club-use protected some older club-goers from experiencing a loss of control by providing support and protection in the context of diminished physical and cognitive capacities. Further, club-going was a way to exercise choice – fundamental to autonomy – by providing opportunities for decision-making about what to do and when to do it. Autonomy was also enhanced by the club being a resource for maintaining equality in relationships, which can become more difficult in later life as a result of reduced capacity for reciprocation. Finally, participating in activities which provided enjoyment, pleasure, fun and excitement - aspects of everyday life to which older people may have reduced access – may have contributed to a sense of control.

The aim of this chapter is to consider the implications of these findings for an understanding of the mechanisms of social capital creation and for outcomes of club-based social capital for the older club-goers. This chapter has two main sections. Section I describes some mechanisms of social capital creation. These include place-based mechanisms - the ways in which the club operates as an opportunity structure - and network-based mechanisms, both structural and functional, which underpin the social capital creation process. Section II considers two broad types of social capital outcomes which emerged as relevant in this context, and which are the result of those available resources being utilised. The first outcome is the facilitation of resource access, and the second outcome is social connectedness.

Section I: Mechanisms of Social Capital Formation

One of the aims of this research was to describe some of the mechanisms by which social capital was created in the club context. This question was a development of the initial research question which was about the *nature* of club participation. This section describes both place-based mechanisms (physical and organisational features of context) and

network-based mechanisms (network structure and function). To identify network-based mechanisms, I needed to account for the roles of both the structure of networks and the content of the interaction between components of the network, as well as the fact that these networks and interactions were emplaced in a particular context. I found that Keith's description of the mechanisms of community creation provided an account which was a good fit with these findings. *Community* is seen as having three components: an affective dimension of "we-feeling", a "behavioural and cognitive dimension of patterned social interaction" and a "territorial aspect" (Keith, 1980, p.172). The patterned social interaction and we-feeling are seen here in the network-based mechanisms, while territorial aspects of 'community' are considered (although in a more circumscribed fashion) as place-based mechanisms.

I will first describe place-based mechanisms of social capital formation which operate because of the club's nature as a specific opportunity structure (Macintyre & Ellaway, 1999; Baum & Palmer, 2002). I will then shift focus slightly to consider features of social networks (structural and functional) which create social capital.

Place-Based Mechanisms

Keith's (1980) observation that community could develop because it was bounded geographically points to the situatedness of networks in which social capital is being created. Club-based networks are situated in a particular place, which is the Langley Club, and there are features of this particular context (Dempsey, 1990a) which shape the process of social capital creation. In this way, the club is an opportunity structure.

The three Findings chapters have described various features of this particular context which have shaped the structure and function of the older club-goers' networks. Chapter Four described historical, socio-demographic and geographical features of this particular context, including the Langley area in which the club is located and the club's historical development which has influenced, amongst other things, the particular make-up of the membership. This chapter also described the regulatory and commercial contexts which influenced available activities and some aspects of staff-member interaction. Other contextual features included the voluntary associational nature of the club, its physical layout, available activities and opportunities afforded by involvement in voluntary activities. Chapter Six, although focusing on the club as a resource for the practical management of everyday life, nevertheless described a range of contextual factors

influencing the operation of club-based social networks. One such factor is the affordability of the club - stemming from the particular organisational arrangements - which facilitates access to networks, and hence opportunity for interaction. Such access was also facilitated by perceptions of safety generated by this particular context. Other contextual features referred to in Chapter Six were activities such as bingo which facilitated social engagement and reciprocity in relationships.

I will now discuss particular contextual features which operate as opportunity structures for the creation of social capital at the Langley Club, including both physical and organisational features.

Physical Contextual Features

The club is a particular built environment in a particular spatial location. Aspects of these physical features shape club-based social capital. I will first consider the influence of the club's specific spatial location and then consider aspects of the club's built environment.

The Club's Location in its Local Community

Much interaction between friends, neighbours and relatives – the stuff of social capital – takes place in "geographically based", local community networks (Misztal, 2005). The Langley Club was used by older club-goers as an everyday part of the activities and interactions, and this was reflected in language used to describe club-use such as "popping in", and the way that club-goers used the club to meet up with friends from the Langley area. The location of the club in the local community may therefore contribute to a neighbourhood which encourages "community connections", a factor in social capital creation (Leyden, 2003). Furthermore, the Langley Club's financial and in-kind support for organised groupings of older people in the Langley area facilitates access by individual older people to the social participation and other benefits which result from participation in those groupings. At a more macro- level, registered clubs generally make significant contributions to their local communities by providing employment, infrastructure and services which contribute to the amenity of the local area (PC, 1999; CCCANZ, 2001; ABS, 2006).

The Built Environment of the Club

A physical aspect of the context at play in the production of club-based social capital is the club's built environment. This includes its architecture (particularly the layout of the various spaces), the arrangements of furniture and other objects, as well as material

features such as the style of the décor. The features of the built environment create *affordances* (Gibson, 1979) which are the possibilities (Bitner, 1992; Halford, 2008), constraints and opportunities for action – including social action – as these are perceived by a person in that environment (Fayard & Weeks, 2007)[143].

The physical setting of a place impacts social interaction (Bennett & Bennett, 1970; Forgas, 1979; Bitner, 1992; Gieryn, 2000). A pre-requisite for social interaction is being co-located, but "bodily co-presence" can result in either "engagement or estrangement" (Gieryn, 2000, p.476). Whether engagement or estrangement occurs is mediated in part by aspects of the built environment. In addition to enabling propinquity which brings people together, aspects of the club's built environment affect how long people may spend interacting and the direction in which interaction proceeds (Bennett & Bennett, 1970; Bitner, 1992).

Furthermore, the club's built environment is an important contributor to the *nature* of the club-member relationship, affecting its quality and strength, or attachment. For example, the informality of much club-based interactions is influenced by the built environment (with open spaces for ease of movement and multiple opportunities for interaction), and informality is a factor in attachment to club-like settings (Furman, 1997; Oldenburg, 1999).

Changes in the built environment which were a consequence of the remodelling of the club affected the way in which the club operated as an opportunity structure for social capital. As reported in Chapter Four, many changes appear to have been commercially driven, militating, to an extent, against social capital production. Although I had not seen the club prior to the most recent major renovations, reports from members suggested a number of changes which had both positive and negative impacts. Much of this was described in Chapter Four.

Contextual Effect of the Club's Spatial Layout

The architectural design of the club's spaces, as well as the availability and arrangement of functional objects such as furniture, are aspects of the built environment which affect social interaction as well as affecting how the club is perceived. The way in which the

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[143] The club's built environment influences social processes, but at the same time is a product of social processes. Each time the club was remodelled - which was often - decisions were made about its design. These decisions were presumably made in large part by Board members and paid management, in conjunction with the construction company's architect. In this way, the club's built environment was itself "a product of multiple inter-relations" (Halford, 2008, p.12).

club is perceived in turn influences, for example, attachment to the club. Such features of the club's spatial layout include its accessibility, its complexity ("elaborate", multiple spaces) and the availability and nature of seating. An aspect of the club's layout was its accessibility. The club's relatively good accessibility for people with mobility difficulties enabled participation which might not have otherwise been possible. Such accessibility features included a ramp to the front doors, lift access from the car-park to the club, as well as between floors within the club.

The club's spatial layout included multiple spaces which permitted multiple uses. Such "elaborate" - as opposed to "lean" - environments permitted a wide range of activities and social processes to take place (Bitner, 1992), including incidental meetings as well as facilitating existing relationships. The likelihood of incidental "encounters" (Misztal, 2005) is increased in this 'elaborate' environment because of the multiplicity of uses of the different spaces. Pauline, for example, described how she met Christina, an encounter which took place in a space adjacent to the room where they had been playing bingo:

> I think she might have been at the next tab[le].....no! Out having a cigarette and the next time we went she asked me to lend her a cigarette because she wouldn't smoke in front of her next door neighbour. Isn't it funny? That's how I started talking with this Christina. (Pauline interview)

The existence of multiple spaces within the club also supported existing relationships. Chapter Five described the ways in which family members and friends could attend the club together but spend time in different spaces – doing different activities – and thereby moderate their level of interaction.

The club's built environment included the availability, type (including comfort), location and arrangement of places to *sit*. These affect whether interaction takes place in a given setting and for how long (Forgas, 1979; Whyte, 1980; Gieryn, 2000). Tom refers to this, in reply to a question on what he likes about clubs: "Oh well, it's not a <u>bad</u> place, plenty of <u>seats</u>. … Yeah, and sit <u>down</u>. Pelt the <u>stern</u> in a <u>heap</u>." A consequence of simply being *able* to sit down and spend time in one place at the club is that club-goers are potentially available to be "recruited" for (that is, engaged in) interaction (Backhouse & Drew, 1992). The type of seating affects length of time spent sitting (Whyte, 1980; Carmona, Heath, Taner & Tiesdell, 2003), which affects the likelihood of interaction occurring and how well people get to know each other in the particular interaction. The comfort of seating at

the club affected interaction on one occasion. I found myself seated in a deep armchair in the Atrium and speaking to another woman who said "I could just go to sleep", and I said "So could I". We then went on to have a conversation, interrupted by her daughter's arrival. This unhurried conversation could not have occurred had we been perched on hard benches.

The location and arrangement of seating at the club was generally conducive to social interaction. The activity of *passing time*, described in Chapter Four, was possible because of the arrangement of tables to seat small groups in the table area of the Lounge. Here interaction took place between friends, acquaintances, strangers and staff. Such facilitation is illustrated by Maurie when he describes how he became friends with some other club-goers. He says: "Two of them … I didn't know when I lived in this area. … The other two just met since I've been comin' up here at lunchtime". I ask: "So how do you actually meet people?" and he explains the process:

> Well, this friend … who was a mate of mine, I came in one day and he was sittin' with the other two and he introduced me to them and we sat and had a beer together and then I find out if I come in and my friend's not here, [and] they're here; we can sit down, you know" (Maurie interview)

Sitting in a circle is conducive to social interaction (Hall, 1966 in Pennycook, 1985), and seating arrangements at bingo enabled eight players to sit at each round table - this was seen by players as conducive to social interaction. Such 'sociopetal settings' encourage social interaction (Osmond, 1957). Seating at the poker machines placed players side-by-side, but did not require them to have eye contact – a 'sociofugal' setting and hence likely to discourage social interaction (Osmond, 1957).   Although social interaction often occurred during 'pokie'-play (described in Chapter Four), it was not as substantial as in other settings within the club. Conversely, bench seating against a wall which faced into the expanse of the Atrium was little used, while the armchairs surrounding the Atrium's small coffee tables were often used.

Changes in the club's spatial layout during renovations [144] appear to have affected interaction, in addition to affecting some club-goers' affective responses - and hence attachment - to the club. The main layout changes at the time of the last major renovation were the increase in size of the poker machine area and the removal of spaces used for indoor sports such as indoor bowls. Such changes were viewed negatively by many older club-goers who saw it as reducing their opportunities for interaction with friends, as well as alienating members, who responded by not renewing their memberships. A very concrete example of one such change, which affected the flow of interaction, was pointed out to me by Tom[145]. During the interview in the Sports Bar, I asked Tom about changes to the club and he pointed out to me the location of a pillar which impeded access to one of the bars, commenting derisively:

> Fancy puttin'... that thing there, that amuses me, fancy having a pier like that, straight in front of the bar, you can only just squeeze through. Stupid! … And this foyer [gesturing to it] - taking up two parts of the place … and damned poker machines taking up most of it! Oh … (Tom interview)

Another change which occurred, this time during the course of the fieldwork, was a narrowing of the aisles between the banks of poker machines which significantly impeded free movement around the pokie area. My own experience with this change was that the area became less comfortable, which may have inhibited social interaction (Carmona et al., 2003), as well as making casual movement around the space more difficult.

Style of the Club's Décor

Another aspect of the built environment which may have consequences for social capital formation is the style of the club's décor. As described in Chapter Four, the décor created a sense of opulence and luxury, with high quality materials used in the building and in the furniture and fittings. This style of décor was made a feature of the club at the time of the last remodelling. The effect of the style of décor – interior and exterior - in terms of social

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[144] The last major renovations took place before I did the fieldwork for this research, so my observations are based on reports from other club-goers and staff, as well as some documentary sources. The data lacks any accounts of ways in which spatial arrangements were *improved* by the last renovations. This is not to say that some members did not see any improvements, as it is possible that negative effects are simply more noteworthy than positives.

[145] Tom is a retired tradesman, so it is perhaps not surprising that he was particularly aware of structural features of the club's design.

capital is that it influences people's cognitive, emotional and physiological "internal responses", and thereby influences 'approach' or 'avoidance' behaviour (Bitner, 1992). This has implications for attachment, an aspect of social capital (ABS, 2004), as well as inhibiting or facilitating social interaction.

Chapter Four described how the club's ambience is created, and how it is experienced by club-goers. Some viewed it as an aspect of the club's attraction. Myra accounted for her involvement at the club this way:

> I had seen photos of it - and I walked in and I thought "Ooh yes, sure!".
> Maybe I'm a bit snobby, but it *is* **-** when you walk in, it <u>does</u> give you a
> nice feeling….it looks - it looks <u>good</u> (Myra interview)

Others, however, were deterred by the up-market décor. Peggy says that she preferred the old club to the present one because "now it's all <u>fancy</u> hoo hah, isn't it?". The club's Cafe was refurbished so that the décor changed to a Bauhaus style, with stainless steel fittings and hard chairs[146].

Features of physical context, including style of décor and spatial features of the built environment, were observed to influence ways of interacting and feelings about the club. In this way, the built environment contributed to club-based social capital.

Organisational Contextual Features

Organisational context creates opportunities for social capital formation (Adler & Kwon, 1999). There are features of context created by the fact that the club is an *organisation*, and an organisation of a particular kind – in this case, a voluntary association. I will discuss several aspects of the organisational context including the significance of its historical development, its associational nature, its organisational structure, its provision of activities, as well as the broader regulatory environment which helps to shape the particular organisational context.

Features Created by the Historical Context of the Club

Chapter Four described the historical development of the club. The club has developed in such a way that there is a strong basis for commonalities amongst older members. A

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[146] I have no data on club-goers' response to the changes in the Café, as they occurred after the main fieldwork period.

'common purpose'[147] is shared by older members who are members of the ex-service community. Many of these relationships date back to the immediate post-WWII period (IPART, 2007), and have resulted in a continuation of the camaraderie forged during military service (Hardy-Rix, 1995). A number had friends at the club whom they had known in younger years around the local community, but who became closer when they re-met at the club more recently. William and Eileen vaguely recalled having met at ex-service events, as William and Eileen's husband had been in the same army unit during WWII. This leads to a sense of belonging, that is, "having a relationship of affinity to a community, sharing values, identity and feelings of commitment, and being accepted by others" (ABS, 2004).

Features Resulting from the Club's Associational Nature

The associational nature of the Langley Club directly contributed to social capital. Associational participation is participation in social networks based on shared membership of an association rather than being based on existing interpersonal ties. Associational participation has been seen as a major contributor to, and as an indicator of, social capital (Putnam et al., 1993; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004; Putnam, 2004). Such participation provides access to a pool of people from whom the person can choose to establish personal relationships (Harris, 1983). The club is an opportunity structure for this type of interaction, which is additional to its support for interaction in existing personal networks, such as between friends. Within the club are specific groupings which provide opportunities for associational participation, such as sub-club and ex-service groupings and within groupings such as bingo which - although not strictly associations - function as such[148].

I will now consider further how the associational nature of the club may underpin social capital creation. The main mechanism relates to the connection between associational participation and the network-accessing process which was described in Chapter Five. The role of associational participation in this network access process will now be foregrounded as it shows how social interaction was, in some cases, only possible because of

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[147] The definition of 'common purpose' as "shared intention or motivation, an intended or desired result, end or aim for which a group or community come together." (ABS, 2004, p.42) points to possibilities for community creation.

[148] Participation in the club as a whole (as opposed to participation in groupings which are subsets of the club) may also be of the associational type. This is evidenced by the way that some members saw the club as an entity in its own right, and had a sense of affiliation to the club as a whole.

associational opportunities, which were utilised when informal networks could not be. I developed a model of the club access process (Figure 3 on p.226) which shows, inter alia, how associational participation is reached as the endpoint in a pathway to club participation[149]. This is represented in the model by the circles on the right side of the diagram. These circles represent associational participation – either as the only type of participation or as a type of participation which is additional to informal participation (see next page).

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[149] Some paths from decision nodes (that is, from diamonds) are not present in the model – these are ones for which there is no corresponding data.

has a sense of social deprivation been experienced?

does the person seek to increase their social involvement?

can increased social involvement be achieved informally?

background factors make club participation likely?

is there a need for further social involvement not able to be met informally?

are they encouraged by others to associational use of the club?

perceived alternative opportunities for associational involvement?

already using club for informal social interaction?

does the club offer some instrumental benefits?

encouraged to club involvement by club-goer(s) who are members of existing informal network?

informal social involvement at club

already using club for informal social interaction?

associational top-up of informal use of club

instrumental use of club

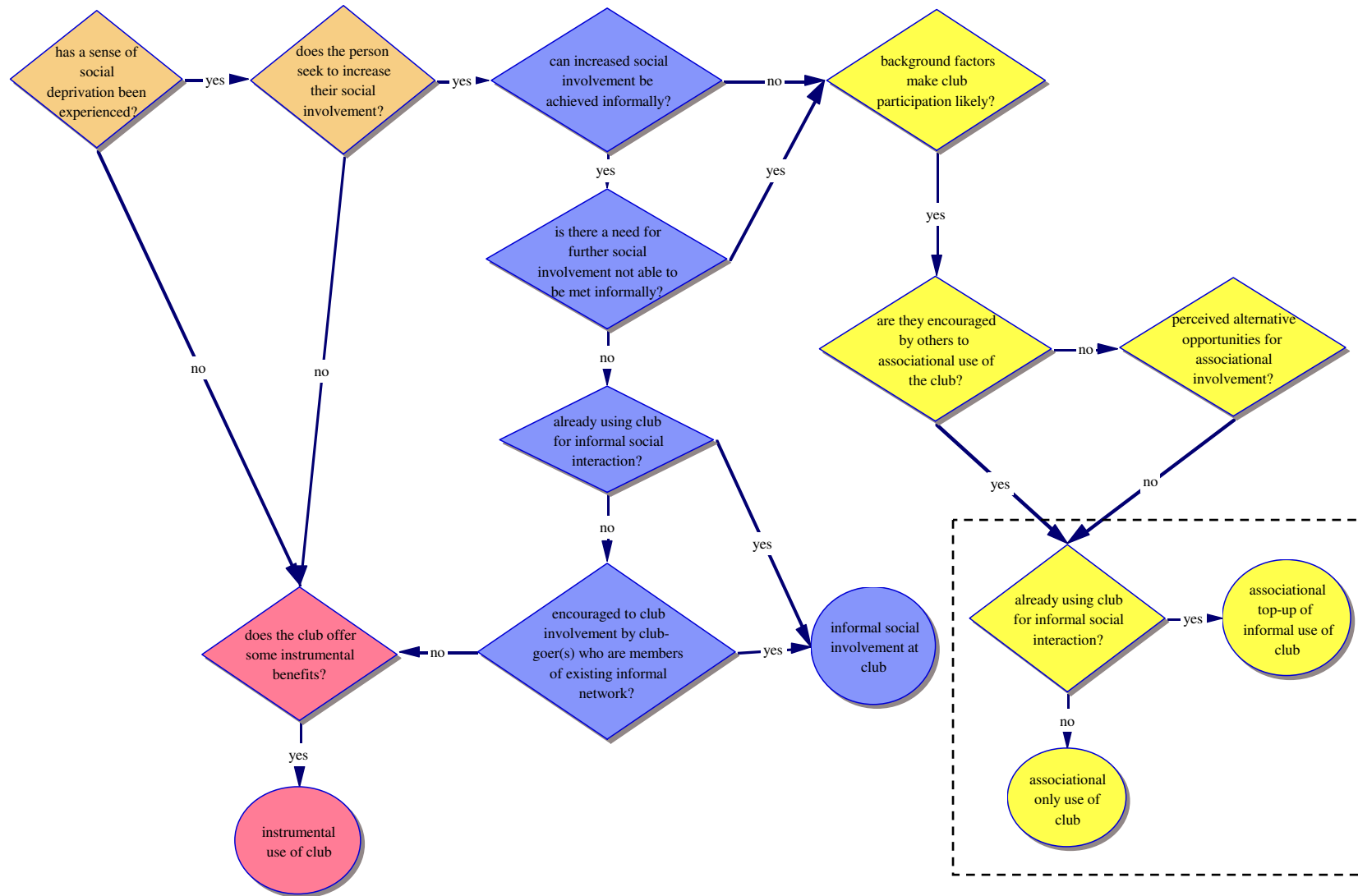associational only use of club

yes — no — yes — no — yes

Figure 3: Model of pathways to club-based network participation: associational participation is represented by the circles on the right

I will briefly describe the model which was developed to encompass all accounts in the data to account for the circumstances of joining the club[150]. The endpoint of relevance for this discussion is *associational participation* (represented by the two circles on the right of the figure)[151]. The start point of the model is related to the experience of social deprivation (diamond on far left of figure) which was, for some, a consequence of later life loss[152]. The model shows that when a sense of social lack is experienced (and the person wants to address this situation), initial attempts to increase social involvement were made by attempting to access existing *informal* social networks[153]. When extension is not possible from within informal networks, it is then that associational participation is sought (Harris, 1983). To put this another way: there was a preference for informal over associational involvement such that associational involvement was sought only when informal involvement was not possible.

There is a further observation to be made about the model which sheds light on opportunities afforded by the club's associational nature. As described in Chapter Five, accessing club networks was enabled by accessing existing social networks, and this holds true when the type of participation is associational[154]. There was one exception to this rule in the data[155]. Maurie reported becoming involved in another club despite *not* having been

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[150] It is, of course, possible that further data collection would have found disconfirming instances which may have led to further refinement (or abandonment) of the model.

[151] In addition to the endpoints of the pathway which is associational participation, there is also the endpoint which resulted from accessing *existing* (informal) social networks (circle near centre labeled *informal social involvement at club*). This access process was described in Part I of Chapter Five: *Accessing and Maintaining Social Networks*. Another endpoint is "instrumental use of club" (circle on far left) which will be discussed in the Section II: *Outcomes of Club-based Social Capital*, in the sub-section headed *Facilitation of Resource Access.*

[152] The model suggests that people may not seek social involvement at the club when they are satisfied with the existing social situation. Club-goers in this situation were using the club for instrumental purposes. Myra's situation illustrates this: Myra joined the Langley Club when she relocated to Sydney from the Central Coast. Myra makes it clear that she is satisfied with her current social arrangements, and that she is not seeking any additional social involvement at the club. This is because her social needs are adequately met within their informal social networks outside the club: "When you have two dogs, and three cats and two kids [referring to daughter and son-in-law] to look after, that's enough" and "And having a young daughter with a lot of friends - oh boy, keeps you on your toes!"

[153] As indicated in Chapter Five, such access generally depended on whether or not the person was encouraged to it by family or friends. If the club-goer was already socially involved at the club, involvement tended to either increase, or to change qualitatively to become more salient.

[154] This was also the case for participation in informal social networks.

[155] As I found only one case which was an exception to the rule, the conclusions which follow are made very tentatively. This aspect of the model emerged during data analysis, and it was not possible to collect further data to verify it.

encouraged by others to do this.   A possible explanation for this exception highlights the value of associational opportunities in helping to manage social deprivation. When Maurie relocated to a new locality, he lacked informal social networks in that area, and made use of formal, associational club-based networks instead (he joined travel and sporting sub-clubs).   Another fact is relevant: Maurie could *see no alternatives* to club use for improving his social situation - "I think, the only alternative would be - I don't know - if it's a sports club, or something like that?".   This suggested to me that, perhaps, in situations where no alternatives are seen to be available, associational involvement can occur *without* the usual encouragement to club participation by others. In the model, this is represented by the *No* arrow leading from the diamond labelled *are they encouraged by others to associational use of the club?* to the diamond labelled *perceived alternative opportunities for associational involvement?* When the answer is "no", as was the case for Maurie - associational use of the club is the end result. This possible pathway to club use is an indication that club participation *may* have a role to play when an older person has no access - because of changes in their social circumstances - to networks which can be used to hook them into social participation opportunities.   Even if this part of the model is inaccurate, the model may still be accurate in depicting a pathway to a type of involvement (associational) which can occur even in the absence of informal social networks. This is an important function of the associational nature of the club.

Features from the Club's Organisational Structure

Being a voluntary association, the Langley Club has a particular organisational structure which potentially creates or inhibits social capital. This structure includes a governing body, members and volunteers. The structural aspects of club-based social networks will be discussed in the next section, and here I will focus on the voluntary roles provided by club participation. As well as being a voluntary association, the club is an organisation which provides leisure services (such as gambling)[156]. Member involvement in governance of the Langley Club was either as a member of the Board or as an active general member involved in, for example, AGMs. The majority of the board and voting members were older people.

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[156] This is the usual way in which registered clubs are characterised (Hing, 2004; ABS, 2006). A related characterisation but one which more effectively captures their associational nature is as a "leisure co-operative" (Caldwell, 1972)

Participation in governance structures within the club may contribute to social capital by means of a number of mechanisms. These include the solidarity connections which may result from interacting with others for a purpose and, on the other hand, the "civic skills" gained through "habits of co-operation" (Putnam et al., 1993). Involvement in governance structures may also connect members out into other groups (bridging ties, which will be considered in a later section). A sense of solidarity and connectedness appeared to be strong among older members involved in governance activities within the club. This was evident in the strong sense of "we-feeling" exhibited by the almost exclusively older participants at AGMs. The second way in which participation in the club's governance may have contributed to social capital is through a mechanism whereby "associations instill in their members habits of cooperation, solidarity and public-spiritedness" (Putnam et al., 1993, p.65), preparing them for participation in "civil society", a source of social capital (Harper & Kelly, 2003). It is not clear from the data that this mechanism was in operation. Many of these people had been involved in organisations for decades and such a process, had it occurred, may have occurred decades ago. It is not possible, therefore, to draw any conclusions about this process.

Another type of club-based organisational involvement which generates social capital is volunteering (Baum, 1999; Onyx & Leonard, 2002)[157]. Volunteering is increasingly being considered within a social capital framework (Wilkinson & Bittman, 2002). It may contribute to social capital by its facilitation of collective action (Wilkinson & Bittman, 2002), or by enhancing "personal and collective efficacy" (Onyx & Leonard, 2002). Furthermore, volunteering helps to create solidarity and sense of community (Ryan, Agnitsch, Zhao & Mullick, 2005). Club-based volunteering was found to contribute to collective action, efficacy and a sense of community – all of which impact social capital. Some older club-goers were involved in voluntary activities, particularly through groupings such as the Sub-Branch and Women's Auxiliary. Ex-service based volunteering, such as hospital visiting of sick Sub-Branch members and the organisation of ex-service commemorative events drew members together with a common purpose. The Women's Auxiliary voluntary work creates a strong sense of purpose, solidarity and "we-feeling".

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[157] Involvement in the club's governance structures is also a type of volunteering, but I have separated them out in this discussion in order not to lose sight of the possible "civic" benefits of governance activities.

Features of the club's organisational context, along with the physical contextual features discussed earlier together make-up the place-based mechanism of social capital creation in the club context.

Network-based Mechanisms

The second group of mechanisms of social capital creation to be discussed are those structural and functional features which operate in social networks specifically. The nature and operation of these networks is affected by the physical and organisational contexts just described. Social capital is fundamentally a relational construct, and it is social networks and their operation which underlie it (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Burt, 2000). A range of club-based relationships was described in Chapter Five. These included those which are between horizontal network components (ABS, 2004), including with family members, friends, acquaintances and other interactants in generalised relationships (Stone & Hughes, 2002). Social capital is created when networks operate in such a way that resources are available to interactants (Lin, 1999). The community creation processes (Keith, 1980) which align with these network-based mechanisms are the behavioural and cognitive dimensions of patterned social interaction and we-feeling (Keith, 1980). There are two types of features of these network-based mechanisms: those that are related to network structure, and those which are derived from the functioning of those networks. This distinction is akin to that drawn between background and emergent factors in community creation (Keith, 1980). In this setting, structural features included network diversity, size and density, while functional features were network qualities, focusing on norms which are akin to emergent factors.

Social Capital Mechanisms based on Network Structure

The particular *structure* of a social network influences the network's capacity to produce social capital. Social capital theorists - building on the earlier field of social network sociology - have given a great deal of attention to the role of structural properties of networks in social capital (Burt, 1992; Putnam et al., 1993; Burt, 2000; Stone, 2001). Network structure affects social capital since it determines the extent to which network members interact with each other. The greater the extent of interaction, the greater the 'quality' of relationships, the higher the level of 'trustworthiness', and the stronger the basis for obligations and expectations (ABS, 2004). Furthermore, network characteristics such as size and density may affect the "flow of resources" through a network (Baum &

Ziersch, 2003). The effect of these structural characteristics is mediated by the features of context referred to earlier. Structural characteristics of networks include network size, density of ties between network components, and the diversity of the backgrounds and social situations of network members (Stone, Gray & Hughes, 2003, p.2).

Network Diversity

One aspect of network structure which affects the social capital in a network is the network's *diversity*: the extent to which the network is composed of people who are similar or different in characteristics such as age, class, gender and cultural background. The club-based networks under consideration here lacked diversity in these characteristics, but rather shared a range of 'structural commonalities' (Furman, 1997) which are background factors that facilitate the development of solidarity within the network (Keith, 1980). The commonalities shared by members of networks of older club-goers were described in Chapter Four in considering characteristics of the club's membership.   Data on relationships presented in Chapter Five indicated that the different network types, such as (horizontal) relationships between friends, tended to be between people who were similar. I will now review some network commonalities – age, class, ethnicity, gender and marital status - and consider how they work to create social capital in this context.

The older club-goer's social networks tend to be age-homogeneous, despite the club being an age-mixed setting. Social capital may be fostered by social interaction encouraged by the commonality of experience which accompanies commonality of age, since:

> A sense of shared past and present experiences pulls these people together at the same time as it makes them feel distinct from others (Keith, 1980, p.175).

Thea alluded to this when she addressed my question regarding whether she experienced ageism:

> I just mix with - most of my friends are in my age group … our interests are similar (Thea interview)

Shared age may be a factor in the development of solidarity, yet it is not sufficient; shared socioeconomic status is also a significant structural factor in group solidarity (Russell, 1981). Commonalities arise from being of a shared socioeconomic position or class which share some similarities of experience. Topics of conversation included difficulties many shared such as financial restrictions and managing money. Discussion of gambling

strategies, particularly how to influence luck, were common and may be related to class (Lynch, 1990). Similarly, shared class position may mean shared norms, values and attitudes (Haralambos & Holborn, 1996) – factors associated with social capital. Interests, hobbies and so on vary by class as well (Bennett et al., 1999), and shared interests are a basis for common action, and hence social capital.

Shared cultural background, including ethnicity and religious identity, can bind network members into community (Myerhoff, 1978). This appeared to be the case amongst the members from the United Kingdom. This is evident in Olive's use of the word "because" in this account of why Olive counts a particular fellow club-goer as a "friend": "because she's English, you see?". Another club-goer, Agi, justified her unlikely relationship with the cognitively impaired Agnes, by saying "We're both from Dundee".

Although gender segregation can function as oppression, gender-specific bonding groups can have "positive spin-offs" in terms of social capital (Norris & Inglehart, 2003). Feelings of solidarity or connectedness can result from same-sex groupings in which each group can communicate in a gender appropriate style. Male and female older club-goers occupied distinct gender worlds (Tannen, 1990), a situation which was reflected in differential use of spaces within the club and participation in different activities. Solidarity was built in groups of women by the club's support for face-to-face interactions involving intimacy, personalism and interpersonal sensitivity (Albert & Cattell, 1994; Adams, 1994). This was evident at female-dominated bingo where conversation had an air of intimacy about it – and where groups of women sat, literally, face to face, at round tables. Men's solidarity was supported, also, through facilitation of types of interaction, such as unplanned meetings the focus of which was "having a beer"[158]: drinking together "acts as a fixative for social activity and a bond which unites" older men (Fennell & Davidson, 2003, p.320). Men's characteristically more instrumental style of interacting (Albert & Cattell, 1994) - as well as a preference for 'doing' over 'being' (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986) - may explain the satisfaction gained from leadership positions within the club and its sub-clubs.

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158 Men's preferred style of interaction has been described as being instrumental and activity centered (Adams, 1994). It seems that there were not as many club-based opportunities for this style of interaction as there once would have been. In the past, groups of men built, maintained and rebuilt the club by themselves, for example.

A final commonality to be considered here is marital status. Many of the older women, in particular, had been widowed, and this was a bond which united some groups of members. It is a direct basis for some club-based networks, such as Widow's Clubs. This is exemplified in Peggy's account of the solidarity created by shared experience of social loss in the Widow's Group of a nearby club:

> I went in and that, but all the ladies said 'don't worry about how you feel,
> we've all been through the same thing" (Peggy interview)

Less formally, shared experience of marital status, such as widowhood, forms a basis for commonality of experience between club-goers in more general interaction.

Strong bonds between groups of older club-goers based on commonalities of age, gender, cultural background, and marital status formed a structural basis for the operation of networks in the creation of social capital. I will now consider two more structural properties – network size and network density – before turning to the functional feature of networks.

Network Size

The size of a social network affects the availability of social capital in that network (Gieryn, 2000; Stone, 2001) just as the "size of the collectivity" is a factor in community formation (Keith, 1980, p.176). If the opportunity to form social ties is reduced then social ties are few, reducing network members' access to social capital (Stone, 2001). On the other hand, larger networks promote access to social capital only when those more extensive ties can be mobilised, as indicated by Bourdieu (1986) who says that:

> the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends
> on the size of the network of connections *he can effectively mobilise*"
> (Bourdieu, 1986, p.249, my italics)

In the club context, taken as a whole, networks appear large, ostensibly enabling access to sizeable amounts of social capital. The segregation of older people's networks within the club, however, prevent the mobilisation of the social capital in much of these potential connections. Instead, the smaller networks in which older club-goers in fact interact are a source of solidarity and therefore social capital, but of the bonding type. The Langley Club, as well as being generally a small club, hosts particular activities which are attended by a limited number of people. Bingo, for example, was small enough for many players to feel as though they know most, if not all, of the other players. Such small, "close-knit"

networks permit the establishment of trust and "intimate familiarity", facilitating social capital (Paldam & Svendsen, 1999, p.8).   Consistent with this is club-goers' own understandings of the effect of club-based network size on the development of a sense of community. Club-goers perceived large clubs to be less conducive to a sense of community than smaller ones.   This reflects the fact that smaller networks are more effective in fostering social capital of the bonding sub-type.

Network Density

A further structural feature of club-based networks which impacted their social capital is the *density* of many of the older club-goers' networks, that is, the extent to which everyone knows everyone else (van Willigen, 1989).   In dense networks, social capital is generated through high levels of cooperation (Stone, 2001), and norm reinforcement (van Willigen, 1989).   This density was particularly in evidence at AGMs, where it was clear that many attendees were well-known to each other.   This density was not restricted to club-based networks.   For example, the conversation between two of my table mates who had not met before included a discussion of mutual friends and acquaintances who were not club-goers but lived in the local community. The dense club-based networks indicated that the networks are characterised by "closure" which means that they contained "sufficient ties between a certain number of people to guarantee the observance of norms" (Portes, 1998, p.6).

The structural features of networks included their diversity, size and density and we saw how these features might underpin club-based social capital in the older club-goers' networks.   It is these structural features which underpin the *function* of the networks, and it is in their functioning that social capital is created. I will now turn to a consideration of these functional features of networks.

Mechanisms based on Network Functioning

This section is about some aspects of networks which arose from their functioning to create social capital.   These aspects functioned by creating strong intra-group ties, and hence the social capital created was largely bonding social capital.   I will talk about reciprocity, then norms of *equality* and *tolerance and inclusiveness*.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity was observed in relationships and served several functions, including facilitating horizontal relationships with peers, both close and casual, as well as facilitating

relationships with family. Reciprocal exchange was also observed in relationships with club staff. It served purposes such as building friendships and maintaining family relationships in the face of threats to equality of exchange. In terms of addressing the research question about social capital – what role did reciprocity play in the mechanisms of social capital creation? As a norm[159] it was not a major one but it nevertheless contributed to the bonds creating solidarity and hence bonding social capital.

Reciprocity in the Relationships of Older Club-Goers

The capacity to maintain reciprocity in interactions is a crucial component of later life wellbeing (Ingersoll-Dayton & Antonucci, 1988; Antonucci, Jackson & Biggs, 2007), and this research has shed some light on ways in which club participation is well-placed to contribute. Chapter Five described the central role played by reciprocity in friendship, family and more casual interactions, including with club staff. Chapter Six described how maintaining symmetry was important for autonomy and self direction. I will overview the role of reciprocity in friend-like relationships (Spencer & Pahl, 2006), then in family relationships.

Reciprocity was a factor in friendship, while maintaining reciprocity was an aspect of equality of relationships. Reciprocity was a characteristic of friend-type relationships enacted at the club, and was observed: in commitment to the relationship (indicated by, for example, fulfilling an unspoken obligation to inform a friend when not coming to bingo); in the provision of mutual assistance (for example, swapping reading material, giving and sharing food, "sharing" luck); and in looking after each other's interests (including, for example, minding seats for friends at bingo). Reciprocal exchanges of this kind were all made possible by features of the club. More broadly, opportunities provided by the club for reciprocal action maximised the older club-goers' ability to participate on an "equal footing" and to engage in "the give and take of which so much of everyday life consists" (Rubinstein, 1986, p.216).

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159 A norm almost invariably referred to in connection with social capital is "trust" (Putnam et al., 1993). In the context of social capital, trust refers to "confidence in the reliability of a person or a system" (ABS, 2004, p.26), and operates to "enhance the capacity of individuals to join with others" (Cox & Caldwell, 2000, p.62), and hence social capital. It is "generalised trust" (Putnam et al., 1993, p.171) - an "impersonal or indirect form of trust" - which is needed for social capital in groups and communities (Uslaner, 2002). This sort of trust is often specifically measured by social capital instruments (eg Onyx & Bullen, 2000). This sort of trust did not emerge as relevant in this research context, however. "Thick trust" which is between individuals (Putnam et al., 1993) was, however, observed, which may contribute to group solidarity and hence social capital.

Similarly, club participation supported equality of exchange of older members with their families, often threatened in later life (Lowenstein, Katz & Gur-Yaish, 2007). The use of "meat-trays" in the title of this thesis points to the role of the club in facilitating access to resources for, inter alia, maintaining equality of exchange with family members, particularly adult children. Club use may go some way to assisting older club-goers to avoid "becoming a burden" on relatives, a major concern for older people when equality is threatened (Arber & Evandrou, 1993a), as it was for Olive who was very concerned not to become a burden to her daughter with whom she had a close and supportive relationship. In situations in which support is required, being able to maintain reciprocity in other areas, such as assisting a daughter to manage her household by providing her with meat, may facilitate a sense of independence by reducing feelings of obligation (Sixsmith, 1986a; Cordingley & Webb, 1997).

Reciprocity was a feature of relationships of the older club-goers and the club was used by them to maintain reciprocity. What, then, is the role of these reciprocal interactions in club-based social capital?

Reciprocity as a Mechanism of Social Capital Creation

Reciprocity is a mechanism of social capital creation since it is a feature of the functioning of networks. In the literature on social capital creation, the notion of reciprocity features strongly. The presence of reciprocity in club-based interactions initially led me to see reciprocity unproblematically as an aspect of club-based social capital creation. Further exploration of the concept of reciprocity in the social capital literature, however, left me very confused. Although it seemed to be in agreement that there is a relationship between level of reciprocity in networks and amount of social capital (Putnam et al., 1993; Baum & Ziersch, 2003; ABS, 2004), other aspects of the role of reciprocity in social capital were less clear-cut. Reciprocity is treated by some theorists as a norm (Putnam et al., 1993; Fukuyama, 2001), while other theorists (such as Coleman, 1990) treat reciprocity as a property of transactions within the network – for example, "the act of doing favours for others and exchanging resources with others" (Prell, 2006, par 6.5). What I have described so far in terms of reciprocity at the club fits well with the latter - resource exchange - view, but it is less clear whether reciprocity in the club context can be described as a "norm", as in the former view. I will now consider this distinction further.

The dominant conceptualisation of reciprocity in the social capital literature is of reciprocity as a norm (Putnam et al., 1993; Woolcock, 1998; Stone, 2001). The norm-like

nature of this is highlighted in Putnam's description of "generalized reciprocity" - the type of reciprocity characterising networks with high social capital:

> "I'll do this for you now, without expecting anything immediately in return, and perhaps without even knowing you, confident that down the road you or someone else will return the favour" (Putnam, 2000, p.134)

However, the mere *existence* of reciprocal exchange in a network - as was the case at the club - does not amount to the existence of a *norm* of reciprocity. To count as a norm, there is a requirement that there be an *expectation* of reciprocity, and additionally some *sanctions* when the norm is violated (Halpern, 2005). The evidence from the data of the existence of expectations of reciprocal action is very limited. There was some in, for example, showing disapproval if agreements to meet were not met, but in fact expectations were generally of the opposite nature – there was an expectation, rather, that expectations of others generally *not* be held. This will be discussed shortly in the section on the norm of *tolerance and inclusiveness.* It is not surprising that reciprocity might work the way it does in this particular context and not in some other way since norms of reciprocity are "extremely context dependent" (Hooghe, 2002, p.16).

Another way in which reciprocity might contribute to social capital - without functioning as a norm - is as a transaction which contributes to group solidarity. Reciprocity, or "mutuality", is part of the notion of "community" (Selznick, 1996; Schroeder, 1999). Reciprocal interaction has been found to be important for community formation in groups of older people (Keith, 1980; Shield, 1997). Sharing of food during a meal, for example, has been described as a "bonding mechanism" (Visser, 1991), as creating a "special fellow feeling" (Sidenvall et al., 2000), and a "feeling of community membership" (Quandt et al., 2001). In this setting, then, the particularised reciprocity observed in interactions functioned to create group solidarity and a sense of community, and hence bonding social capital.

The Norm of Equality and the Norm of Tolerance and Inclusiveness

Although reciprocity may not have been a noteworthy norm in this context, there were two other network qualities which could be characterised as norms. Described in Chapter Five, these norms were *equality* and *tolerance and inclusiveness.* These norms were clearly mechanisms in the creation of club-based social capital. Consensus is lacking in the social capital literature on how norms might function as mechanisms of social capital creation (Adler & Kwon, 1999). Norms may create community - and social capital - by

encouraging people to act cooperatively, enabling them to achieve group goals (Putnam et al., 1993; Woolcock, 1998; Stone, 2001; ABS, 2004).   Alternatively, and perhaps of greater relevance in this context, group norms may foster solidarity and a sense of community – bonding social capital. Returning to the anthropological perspective used earlier, the "behavioral and cognitive dimension of patterned social interaction" of which community consists includes "shared expectations, norms and beliefs" (Keith, 1980, p.172). I will discuss these norms in turn.

Equality

Equality was a norm which operated in the networks of older club-goers. It functioned to minimise conflict and thereby create social harmony and solidarity, and hence bonding social capital. Maintenance of unity and harmony were highly valued by the older club-goers[160]. This was indicated by the frequent approving references by older club-goers to their perception that there was little disharmony between members and to the way that club-goers generally get on well with each other. Club participation provided a multitude of opportunities to show equality. At bingo, interaction around getting bingo, taking prizes, the luck system and the use of space (such as minding) all involved negotiating the risk of creating inequality.   Unwritten social rules which were in operation across many areas of club participation included the *fair share* rule, the *don't make a show of yourself* rule and the *be courteous and polite* rule.   These rules, along with the social control including sanctions to enforce them, made up the norm I am calling *equality*.

Tolerance and Inclusiveness

Two related aspects of interactions are described in Chapter Five as the norm of *tolerance and inclusiveness.* Older club-goers were tolerated and accepted even when they had characteristics which singled them out as different from the rest of the group, or behaved in a way which might otherwise have been seen as unacceptable. The operation of this norm helped to create an environment which facilitated participation and a sense of belonging.

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[160] This desire for unity and harmony is not universal in groupings of older people. Myerhoff (1978), for example, found that the members of a senior citizen's centre seemed to thrive on conflict.

Group solidarity was created by inclusiveness, but paradoxically, it was also created by *exclusiveness*. A network which excludes others can reinforce solidarity between the included members of the network[161].

This mechanism can be illustrated by looking at the way in which Andro – whose regular norm violations are presented in Chapter Five - was viewed by other older club-goers, and how their shared perception strengthened group solidarity. Many older club-goers with whom I spoke referred to Andro's actions with strong disapproval. Despite this, little action was taken against Andro directly. Andro had come to symbolise something bad which needed to be avoided. In this way, "the worst possible community member is also a common point of reference" (Keith, 1980, p.187). The shared stance on Andro may have operated as a source of solidarity amongst club-goers (with the exception, presumably of Andro himself), since "the presence of these symbols, distinctive to members of the emerging community,… promotes community formation by emphasizing their separateness and uniqueness both in terms of their shared experiences and of their feelings about these experiences" (Keith, 1980, p.187). Faircloth notes that people like Andro "are a local source of commonality, and thus operate to construct community by both positive and negative inter-personal comparison" (Faircloth, 2002, p.564).

Social capital, particularly of the bonding variety, was shaped in this context by the norm entitled here 'tolerance and inclusiveness' – both in its being complied with and in the group's response to its violation. This norm was one aspect of the functional features of networks. This section has discussed social capital mechanisms based on features of networks including reciprocity, and norms of *equality* as well as *tolerance and inclusiveness*. In addition, there were also structural features of networks which together made up the network-based features underlying social capital creation at the club. These network-based mechanisms operated within a particular context that had physical and organisational features which were the basis for the club's being an opportunity structure for social capital.

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[161] At extremes, this is the so-called "dark side" of social capital (Portes, 1998; Schulman & Anderson, 1999; Cox & Caldwell, 2000; Coffé & Geys, 2007b), when highly dense networks "entrench particular value systems and norms" (Hawe, Webster & Shiell, 2004, p.973).

Section II: Outcomes of Club-Based Social Capital

One of the aims of this study was to describe the social capital outcomes for the older club-goers. This aim is a development of the (conceptually prior) aim which was to describe the *role* of registered club participation.   The outcomes identified fall into two broad categories: the facilitation of resource access, as well as outcomes related to social connectedness.   In the thesis title, *meat-trays, marginalisation and the mechanisms of social capital creation,* "meat-trays" is short-hand for facilitation of resource access while "marginalisation" is shorthand for social connectedness outcomes – emphasising that social connectedness occurs in the context, as we will see, of marginalisation both within the club and in the wider society. Social capital operates at different levels including at the levels of the individual, local community and nation (Halpern, 2005), and here I focus on outcomes for individuals. The social capital in a network may have multiple outcomes (Portes, 1998; Stone, 2001), and not all outcomes for older club-goers have been considered in this thesis. Health, including mental health, for example, can be an outcome of social capital (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004; Poortinga, 2006a), but health has not been given a great deal of attention in this thesis. I am focussing here on two outcomes which I am labelling "facilitation of resource access" and "social connectedness", and I will turn to these now.

Resource Access Outcomes

One outcome of the social capital inherent in club-based social networks is improved access to the resources available in those networks. This facilitation of resource access may be particularly important for club-goers in later life since events such as bereavement and the onset of disability impact on the personal, social and environmental resources available to the older person to manage their everyday life. When the capacity to access resources is limited, the social capital available in club-based networks may be particularly important. In later life, people act to manage reduced access to resources (Rybash et al., 1995; Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Baltes & Carstensen, 1996), and the fact that many older club-goers made greater use of the club in later life may in part reflect the club's contribution to resource access.

Chapter Six described the many ways in which the club was used as a resource for managing everyday life. Social network resources were accessed to improve older club-goers' capacity to be self-reliant and self-directing. For self-reliance, club-use facilitated

resource access for the management of limited financial resources. One of the main ways in which club-use facilitated access to resources was by *freeing up* other resources to meet needs. This was particularly evident for financial resources which were limited for many older club-goers. Resources could be accessed at the club at lower prices than elsewhere, which freed up financial resources for other necessary or simply desired purposes. Resources were also accessed for the purposes of structuring time, for obtaining food (such as *meat-trays*), and for maintaining and even improving everyday competence. For self-direction, club-use facilitated resource access which protected and supported some older club-goers with lowered physical abilities, which supported the exercise of choice, and which enabled the experience of pleasure.

The earlier discussion about place-based mechanisms of social capital creation – that is, the club as an opportunity structure - drew attention to the physical and organisational features of the club which, in this current context, are the underpinnings of resource access.

Improved access to resources is an outcome of club-based social capital, and it was clear from the nature of some club-goers' use of the club that such an outcome was sought by some members. Voluntary associations may have *expressive* or *instrumental* uses (Gordon & Babchuk, 1959; Cutler & Hendricks, 2000), and the same voluntary association may be used either instrumentally or socially by different members (Hazan, 1980; Russell, 1981). For a sub-set of Langley Club-goers, the primary use made of the club was instrumental, that is, they used the club primarily for the purpose of accessing resources – a motivation which was distinguishable, by them and by me, from a more social motivation.

The model in Figure 4 (p.242) has been presented in an earlier section to illustrate the process in which club-goers accessed existing social networks for club involvement. It is re-presented here to highlight instrumental club use. Instrumental club use is represented by the circle on the lower left, and a number of pathways can be traced to it. Instrumental use was primarily by club-goers who did not need or want further social involvement than they currently had, or who may have needed or wanted additional social involvement but were not encouraged by existing network members to become socially involved:
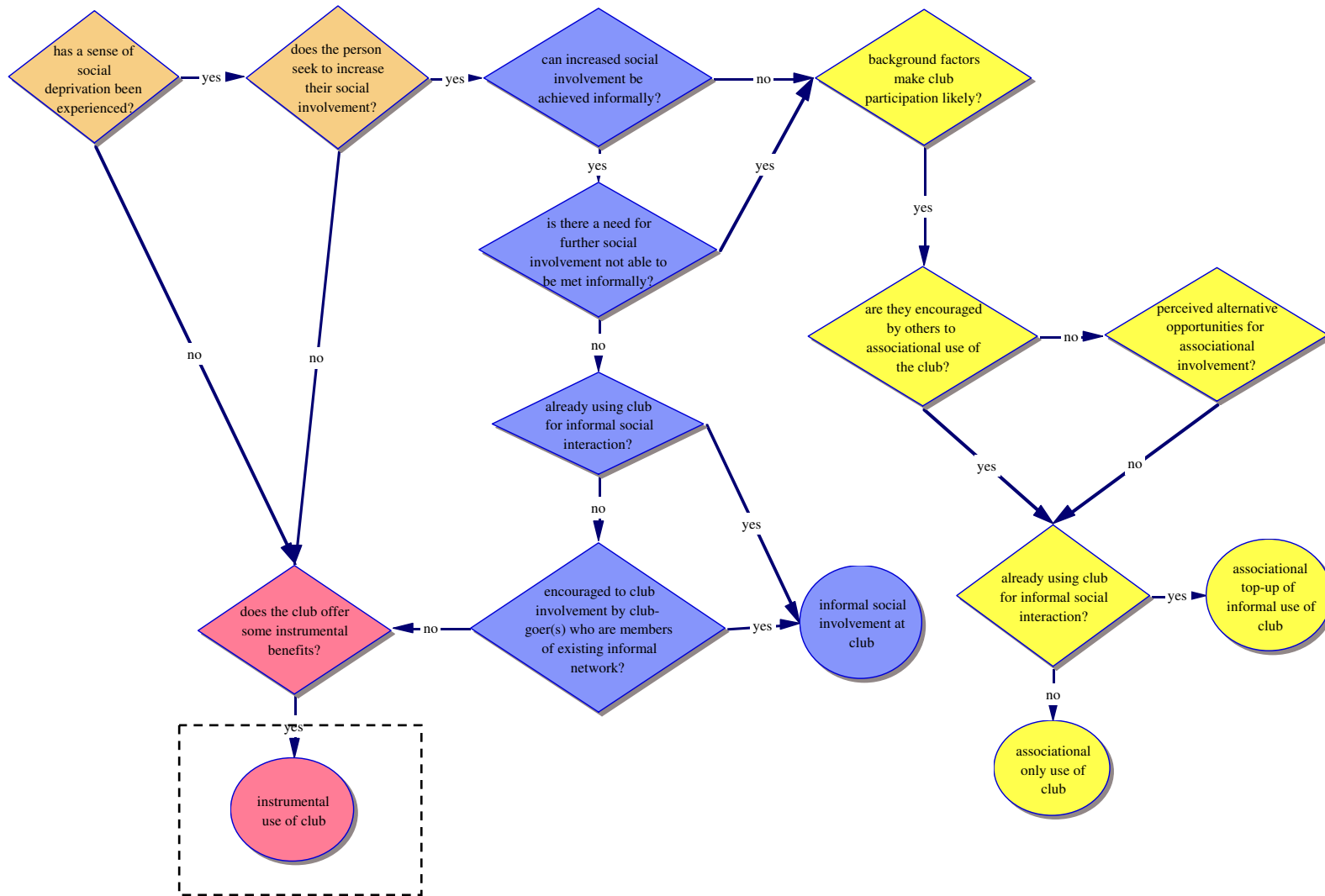
Figure 4: Model of pathways to club-based network participation showing instrumental use of the club (circle on far left)

Such instrumental use was evidenced by data relating to club-goers who made it clear that they were using the club for non-social reasons. Jill, for example, insisted that her reason for coming to the club was purely instrumental - mental stimulation provided by bingo – and said that she had no desire for social involvement at the club because she had adequate social interaction elsewhere.

For some, instrumental use of the club changed over time to become more social during their club 'career'. As they came into personal contact with members of club-based social networks – through their instrumental involvement – their involvement shifted from instrumental to social. Pauline's club use, for example, was instrumental at the time of the research, but there were signs of the possibility of it becoming more socially-focussed. This is indicated by the following exchange which occurred when I asked Pauline what she thought of the social aspects of bingo:

> That's <u>very</u> good, <u>very</u> good. Because everyone at the table does talk to you Virginia, and there's never any fights or arguments. … But I didn't, sort of, *go* there looking to make new acquaintances <u>or</u> new friends, I didn't. I went to play the <u>bingo</u>, <u>that</u> was why I went. (Pauline interview)

When I then ask her, "But if you did make friends you'd be <u>pleased</u> with that?", she replies with enthusiasm "Oh yes! Yes!".   Pauline appeared to be beginning to develop her social involvements at the club and acknowledged the possibility that she may become more socially involved. The fact that, for some club-goers, use of the club was predominantly instrumental points to the role of the club in facilitating access to resources, an outcome of social capital.

Social Connectedness Outcomes

This section deals with outcomes which are related to social connectedness. Two broad outcomes are discussed in this section. These are, firstly, the role of the club in facilitating *getting ahead* or *getting by,* and secondly, the role of the club in managing social marginalisation. Before considering these outcomes, I need first to clarify two aspects of the club's role which feed into these outcomes. These aspects are the bonding or bridging nature of the networks, and the extent to which older club-goers are marginalised.

Review of Concepts

Are the networks of older club-goers' bonding or bridging?

Successful characterisation of social connectedness-type outcomes depends on being able to accurately characterise the *connections* of members of those social networks. In this context, this requires deciding whether networks are *bridging* or *bonding*. Whether networks are bridging or bonding depends, in part, on their diversity, that is, the extent to which members are similar (Stone, 2003b; Franke, 2005; Coffé & Geys, 2007b).

Bridging Ties in Club-based Networks

This section considers the extent to which older people's social networks can be characterised as *bridging*. When club-based networks are viewed at the level of the club, they appear diverse and hence likely to embody bridging ties, yet when viewed at the level of individual older club-goers, such diversity is lacking. I will now consider diversity at both levels.

The Langley Club is a mainstream context for interaction. Club membership is effectively open to any adult, and the network of members is further extended by the presence of a large number of visiting non-members. Given this, the network – taken at the level of the club as a whole – has a reasonable amount of diversity, with all age groups represented, approximately equal numbers of both genders and representation from a range of cultural groups.

The data presented in Chapters Four and Five indicate, however, that this diversity did not 'trickle down' to the networks in which older club-goers participate on a day-to-day basis. Older club-users, like older people generally, participate in social networks that are largely homogeneous with respect to age, gender, class and cultural background (McPherson et al., 2001; Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). This is evidenced by the "structural commonalities" amongst the membership described earlier in this chapter.   I will now review the homogeneous nature of the older people's club-based networks in relation to age, gender, class and ethnicity.

The networks of club-goers were age-segregated and hence lacked ties which crossed age groupings. Older club-goers were to be found almost exclusively in the company of other older people as friends, spouses and so on. Sub-clubs and ex-service groupings within the club, such as the RSL Sub-Branch and its Women's Auxiliary, were usually age-segregated. Particular club activities, such as bingo and bowls - although open to all ages -

were attended almost exclusively by older people. Lack of diversity was reflected in and contributed to spatial segregation. Activities in which older people tended to participate were held in particular spaces and at particular times, creating areas within the club in which older people predominated. Conversely, there were times and places, such as the bar area during an evening party for students, which were occupied almost exclusively by younger club-users. This age-based segregation is acknowledged by some of the older club-goers, who saw older people as a distinct group within the club, and juxtaposed this group with "younger people".

Ties which bridged across gender were also lacking. Interaction was largely between network members of the same gender. Friends at the club were usually same-sex dyads, and groups of friends were rarely of mixed-gender. Couples who came to the club together often separated to meet up with individual friends of the same gender as themselves. Some activities were segregated along gender lines. Men were the main participants in some sporting activities. For bowls, played by both male and female members, separate gender-based teams participated in separate gender-based competitions. Bingo was largely female dominated, and this was openly acknowledged by the female players. On a number of occasions, I heard women making joking comments that men did not belong at bingo and that they "should be at home mowing the lawns". The RSL Sub-Branch was almost all male and the Women's Auxiliary was, not surprisingly, all female. Parts of the club were almost exclusively male areas, such as the bar and the table area of the Lounge, where older men sat, often in the company of other men.

Bridging of the class divide was also lacking. Class-homogeneity of networks is usual in society in general (Giddens, 2006), and also within voluntary associations (Glanville, 2005), with the exception that members in leadership positions tend to be of a higher class than the ordinary membership (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). There was little connection across class cleavages. The older club-goers' social connections were almost exclusively with other club-goers of the same - in this case, working - class. Little interaction was observed between older club-goers and business users of the club, who were potentially of a broader range of classes than the majority of older members, since these groups occupied distinct spatiotemporal territories. Business users tended to use the club's function rooms, and less frequently used other areas of the club. Young people - some of whom had attended private schools in the Langley area – were likely to be of a higher social class category than the older club-goers, but temporal segregation ensured minimal interaction between these groups.

There was little evidence that club-going helped to bridge across ethnic divides. Most older people with whom I came in contact were of Anglo-Celtic background, and there was little mixing with club-goers from other cultural backgrounds. At bingo, non-Anglo players tended to sit together at one table, and this table was not attractive to Anglo players. I saw no evidence of mixing between any of the growing group of Asian members – a small proportion of whom are older – and other cultural groups.

The homogeneity of the older people's club-based networks points to their limited capacity to provide their members with social capital of the bridging type. There was, however, some evidence of bridging ties. Some members met new friends who were not attendees of the Langley Club, potentially giving them access to additional networks in which the new friend participated[162]. Club participation facilitated, for some, links to other voluntary associations, such as the Langley Adult Day Group. For others, club participation linked club-goers to what they understood to be the wider "club scene". Despite these exceptions, bridging links were decidedly lacking in the older club-goers' club-based networks.

Another possible source of bridging ties are the connections between club-goers which are based on *casual* ties. Casual interaction between club-goers who are not well-known to each other can be characterised as creating "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1973), and as such could be a source of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000; ABS, 2004). The data, however, suggest that this was not the case. The earlier consideration of diversity of club-goers' networks suggests that casual interaction with other club-goers was generally with *similar* others. A similar situation was observed in relation to potential *linking* ties which might be expected to be created in interactions with staff. Despite the difference in roles and potential power differentials, these ties could not be characterised as crossing significant group barriers. Although staff were generally younger than the older club-goers, the strongest member-staff connections were with staff of similar age, such as Sharon, the bingo hostess. Of staff who were of a younger age group, members and staff often had similar class backgrounds which served to minimise difference. A sub-set of older club-goers, however, did possess genuine external links. In the data, these were the Board members who often interacted with organisations and individuals outside the club, such as members of parliament.

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[162] It was beyond the scope of this research project to examine the ties of network members which were external to the club. However, it appeared that, generally, such ties were with people who were similar in age, gender, class and cultural background.

Bonding Ties in Club-based Networks

While lacking in social capital of the bridging type, the networks of the older club-goers were not lacking in social capital of the bonding type. Almost all club-based ties of the older club-goers were between individuals who were similar in age, gender, class and cultural background, and, as a result, networks were homogeneous with regard to these characteristics. Such homogeneity fosters strong in-group ties, a source of bonding social capital (Lin et al., 2001).

The mechanisms in operation in these networks which produced this type of social capital have been considered in an earlier section of this chapter, where it was noted that a sense of community and solidarity was created in these sorts of networks. Aspects of network structure that facilitated the functioning of those networks to create social capital were also considered. Relating the operation of these mechanism to the present discussion, it can be seen that structural and functional features of the networks underpin the bonding social capital in these networks.

Casual or "weak" ties may also have played a role in creating bonding social capital. In the previous section I drew attention to the fact that the club-goers' casual ties lacked bridging capabilities, which suggesting that they may instead have contributed to bonding social capital. The similarities between casual interactants and the subjective importance of these ties to the older club-goers suggests that this may be the case. Rosenbaum et al. (2007) have also noted the significance of the "weak social relationships" typical of "third places" (Oldenburg, 1999), and notes the incongruity with a theory of the strength of weak ties, observing that "although third-place relationships represent rich sources of social support, they are characterized as weak social relationships" (Rosenbaum et al., 2007, p.52-3).

I now want to draw attention to the possibility that ties which are of even less apparent strength than "weak" ties may have been important contributors to the bonding social capital of the older club-goers' networks. The data suggest that aspects of the social environment involving the presence of strangers (or near-strangers) were seen as important by older club-goers. This manifested itself in positive comments about generalised other club-goers and staff. It may also be responsible for some reactions to aspects of the club such as positive comments about the general atmosphere of the club, which may have a social component, and also in the somewhat paradoxical conviction by many that poker machine playing was a social act. Add to this that the club is something with which club-

goers have a relationship, and to which attachment occurs, and I find myself compelled to look further than the sum of established social interactions and consider the significance of interactants who are effectively strangers.

I will refer to ties with strangers as "negligible ties", as this is the term used (although in passing) by Granovetter (1973) in his account of the value of "weak ties" – those between people who are known to each other, but not very well. I want to suggest that even the apparently negligible ties are important and contribute to bonding social capital, although they are usually considered to be irrelevant to it in the social capital literature. Granovetter (1973), in a footnote to a discussion of "strong", "weak" and "absent" ties, includes in the latter category:

> ties without substantial significance, such as a "nodding" relationship …
> or the "tie" to the vendor from whom one customarily buys a morning
> newspaper. That two people "know" each other by name need not move
> their relationship out of this category if their interaction is negligible
> (Granovetter, 1973, p.1361)

In other words, according to Granovetter, "negligible" interaction is effectively the absence of ties. Granovetter acknowledges, however, that in certain circumstances, such as in the context of a "disaster", "such 'negligible' ties might usefully be distinguished from the absence of one" (p.1361). Although he does not elaborate on how this might be the case, I assume that in such a situation the negligible tie can be accessed to achieve a desired outcome, such as assistance in disaster relief. It may be, however, that extraordinary circumstances, such as disaster, are not required for negligible ties to become useful. If this is the case, then negligible ties could be contributing to the social connectedness which is an outcome of club-based social capital. I would like to speculate further by considering what aspects of these negligible ties – in this context, at least –may be responsible for making them accessible for connectedness outcomes. The reason for this may be that these "negligible ties" - while consisting of little more than passing interactions - may have *qualities* that contribute to bonding social capital. The qualities were discussed in Chapter Five at some length, and include elements akin to intimacy and reciprocity.

Club-based social networks are largely homogeneous in nature and contribute to bonds of solidarity and hence bonding social capital. It may be that club-based weak ties and even "negligible ties" have a contribution to make in this particular context. Before proceeding

to consider social capital outcomes, I need also to review the extent to which older club-goers experience marginalisation at the club and in the wider community.

The Marginal Status of Older Club-goers

I will now review the data on how older club-goers see themselves in terms of marginalisation vis-a-vis the wider society, and on the extent to which older club-goers are marginalised within the club. I will also consider the marginalisation of the groupings to which older people belong.

Marginalisation of Older Club-Goers Within the Wider Society

Being older and working class is a cause of social marginalisation (Pillemer et al., 2000; Knipscheer, 2006; Quine et al., 2007). In this research, older club-goers identified a range of ways in which they did not fully participate in mainstream society, including having difficulties in accessing certain venues such as the cinema, transport and so on. Despite these objective indicators of social marginalisation, the evidence from the data is mixed on whether the older Langley club-goers *perceived themselves* to be socially excluded in society. As indicated in Chapter Six, some saw themselves as marginalised but did not consider this a cause of concern. Tom, for example, thought it was reasonable that older people be perceived as "fossilised boneheads" because "you've had your life, and that's it". Others did not see older people as marginalised at all. Thea "hadn't really noticed" any different treatment of older people.

Just as individual older people are subject to social marginalisation, so too are their organisations (Russell, 1981). For this reason, and perhaps for other reasons as well, older people tend to reject groups specifically for older people. Although this research did not set out to systematically address this issue, I nevertheless found surprisingly little evidence that such dislike of age-segregation was shared by older club-goers, nor that such groups were viewed as being of lower status, or even that they specifically *preferred* age-mixed settings over age-segregated ones. If age-segregated interaction is disliked, this is not reflected in their social habits. As we have seen, it seems that older club-goers' connections involving network members external to the club tended to be age, class and gender homogeneous - although significant intergenerational interaction with family seemed to occur. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that the older club-goers were unhappy with the homogeneous nature of their social networks. Many of the older club-goers lived in age-segregated accommodation, but none commented negatively on this

aspect of their housing. On the contrary, Tom, who admits that he is not interested in organised activities at his retirement village, says:

> Well, they're <u>nice</u> people over there - at [the retirement village]…. <u>Most</u> of them are nice <u>people</u>. Oh, there's a <u>couple</u> of grouch merchants there, you know. … They go <u>crook</u> all the time, but <u>generally</u> speaking they're all pretty good. (Tom interview)

With regard to Senior Citizens Clubs (well recognised to be age-segregated organisations), many Langley Club-members attended these in addition to the Langley Club, and did not comment on age-segregation as a downside of such involvement. Rita, for example, clearly had a choice between attending the (age-mixed) club and (age-segregated) Senior Citizens and Probus, and still regularly chose the age-segregated options over the club. Mary preferred to attend the Langley Club to attending Senior Citizens - not because it is a more mainstream setting, but simply because physical access was easier. Other Langley Club-goers talked about how they attended various other age-segregated organisations, including the Langley Adult Day Group (either as a member or a volunteer) and a luncheon club organised by the local Community Health Centre, as well as age- and gender-segregated sports such as bowls. In reporting these involvements, none commented on the fact of their age-segregation, or their status. In terms of gender segregation, neither is there data showing that men disliked certain activities, or club spaces, because they were female dominated – a reason often given for men's low participation rate in older people's groups.

Marginalisation of Older Club-goers Within the Club

Chapter Four presented data indicating a range of ways in which older Langley Club users were being marginalised within the club. This was in evidence by such practices as the absence of images of older people in club publicity material, the reduction of services of use to older people (such as the club bus' daytime run) and the removal of financial and other support for sub-clubs whose members were largely older people. Some marginalising practices were small but did not pass unnoticed, such as the way that business users of the club were provided with good quality, freshly brewed coffee (served by a waiter), while bingo players were provided with bulk poor-quality instant coffee (on a self-serve basis).

In light of the extensive marginalisation of older members within the club, it is, once again, surprising that the data did not reveal a greater level of resistance or, at least, dissatisfaction. Tom, for example, who had thought that generally older people (men, at least) were viewed by society as "fossilised boneheads", did not see this as translating to the club context. I asked him "How do you think this club treats older people like yourself?", to which he replied: "Oh, just as, I suppose, as anyone else …. They don't do anything out of the ordinary." There were, however, (temporally) isolated pockets of resistance. Mary reported that she and some other bingo players banded together to boycott cups of tea which they believed were overpriced. Others banded together to "put in a complaint" about bingo being regularly relocated to accommodate business users. Both of these resistance strategies were effective in achieving their aims, but were notable exceptions to a pervasive pattern of acquiescence[163].

This review of the extent of club-goers' marginalisation in the society as a whole and within the club - along with the previous consideration of the bonding nature of their networks - has laid the groundwork for the following discussion of outcomes of club-based social capital. I will now discuss the outcomes of *getting by* vs *getting ahead*, and managing marginalisation.

"Getting Ahead" or just "Getting By"? An Outcome of Social Capital

A commonly discussed outcome of social capital is the extent to which it enables network participants to *get ahead* or to *get by.* As indicated in Chapter Two, getting ahead is an outcome generally considered more desirable than merely getting by. In this context, do older club-goers have access to this positive outcome as a result of their access to club-based social capital?

Getting ahead and *getting by* are related to bridging and bonding social capital, respectively (Putnam, 2000). *Getting ahead* is facilitated by bridging social capital because the heterogeneous networks in which bridging social capital inheres are "overlapping" and may enable access by network members from one network to resources

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[163] It is interesting to speculate why older members were not more concerned about their marginalisation by club management. Perhaps they are accepting because, for many, life is so much better than it had been, Mary says: "the young ones today don't know they're born .... to what we went through." Furthermore, it may be that those who were the most concerned about marginalisation are simply no longer attending the club. Management suggested that major changes to the club which pre-dated the period of fieldwork resulted in a loss of around 2000 members, many of whom were likely to have been older people. It is perhaps this "voting with their feet" which is the strongest indication of the marginalisation of the older membership.

and opportunities in an overlapping network (Stone & Hughes, 2002). These resources are available, then, to help the individual to *get ahead*. This is possible because diverse networks have ''social border-crossing'' ties, which may enhance access to "leverage-type" (that is, bridging) social capital (de Souza Briggs, 1998). The networks of the older club-goers generally lacked these "social border-crossing" ties, and are therefore not likely to facilitate *getting ahead.* The alternative generally proffered to *getting ahead* is *getting by* (de Souza Briggs, 1998; Putnam, 2000), also an outcome of social capital, but one generally considered to be inferior to *getting ahead.* In this context, the homogeneous networks supported bonding social capital, and hence *getting by*. This can be seen in the role of these networks in enabling access to resources for the management of everyday life, as well as in opportunities for social engagement and support – all of which help an older person to *get by*.

What is the significance for older club-goers of the fact that their networks support *getting by* to a greater extent than *getting ahead?* Networks which provide only bonding social capital are often seen as being of little benefit, or worse still, as being harmful, resulting in intolerance of outsiders, and norms that discourage individuals' efforts at betterment. In the voluntary association literature, perspectives which view voluntary associations as "primarily homogeneous groups that reinforce social similarity, or homophily, within social networks" (Glanville, 2005, p.468) emphasise this potential negative outcome of participation. Much of the theorising around the relative benefits of *getting ahead* versus *getting by* has taken place in a discourse concerned with economic and other types of development. Little attention has been paid to these outcomes for people for whom economic betterment may not be the prime concern, such as older people (Barr & Russell, 2006). By valuing *getting ahead* at the expense of benefits of participation in bonded networks (such as solidarity and a sense of belonging), there is a tendency to treat those who participate in these networks as having failed to successfully cultivate the right sort of networks. In the gerontological discourse, this may manifest as failing to age "actively" or "productively". It is not, however, appropriate to assume that *getting ahead* is always a better outcome than *getting by*. As Lin (1999) points out, "the root of preferring a dense or closed network lies… in [the] outcomes of interest" (p.34). It may be that, in later life, the outcome of most relevance is the preservation or maintenance of resources, and for this "denser networks may have a relative advantage" (Lin, 1999, p.34). Further research is needed to develop a better understanding of just which social capital outcomes are most desirable in later life (Stone, 2003a; Barr & Russell, 2006).

The homogeneous networks of the older club-goers were a source of bonding social capital which helped the older club-goers to "get by" but not to "get ahead". The nature of their networks also has implications for another important outcome of social capital which is its role in managing marginalisation.

Managing Marginalisation: An Outcome of Social Capital

The central social connectedness outcome I would like to describe is that club-going enabled the club-goer to manage marginalisation. I have arrived at this conclusion on the basis that the social capital in the networks was of the bonding sort and as such provided the club-goer with solidarity and a sense of belonging. This did not seem to me, however, to account for the full role of club-going. From the very beginning of the research, the centrality of the club for many older club-goers was suggestive of a more fundamental role. One possibility was that its mainstream nature might be important, particularly in the context of research that indicates that older people's dislike, and rejection of age-segregated settings (Russell, 1981). Although the data does not support this possibility directly - that is, that the older club-goers did not themselves identify this outcome of club-going - this does not preclude the possibility that it serves such a purpose. I will now pursue this possibility a little further.

As we have seen, participation in homogeneous or peer groups provides solidarity benefits. As we have also seen, participation in mainstream settings provides protection from the stigma of being associated with negatively valued marginalised groupings (such as groupings of older people) [164]. A type of participation that avoids the stigma of age-segregated groupings while permitting the solidarity of peer-grouping is participation in a (homogeneous) peer group *within* a wider age-mixed setting[165].

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[164] It seems, therefore, that older people's generally homogeneous social networks can be seen as both exclusionary and inclusionary. Harris (1983) refers to this problem as the "'catch 22' of peer grouping": "if you peer group with other deprived persons, you avoid the experience of deprivation while in the group, but reinforce it in other social contexts since your membership is a public proclamation of your deprived state" (Harris, 1983, p.23).

[165] The strategy of participating in homogeneous groups within a wider heterogeneous setting may not be completely effective however. Registered clubs themselves are somewhat stigmatised by their association with their older and working class membership, so members may inherit the club's stigma. Furthermore, the effectiveness of this strategy may be tempered somewhat by the fact that stratification internal to the association may place the older person at some risk of marginalisation (this time, from within the association).

Two outcomes of club-based social capital have been considered which relate to social connectedness. These were the outcomes of getting by, as opposed to getting ahead, and the management of marginalisation. These social connectedness outcomes are in addition to the outcome of facilitation of resource access. Between them, these two outcome represent the benefits of participating in the bonded solidaristic networks at the club.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the findings of this study in relation to the social capital research questions introduced at the beginning of this thesis: *the mechanisms by which social capital are created* and *the outcomes of social capital for the older club-goers.* These research questions were built on the earlier research questions addressed in the findings chapters: *How do the older club-goers use the club – their activities, interactions, spatiotemporal patterns of use?; How do the older people experience and interpret their involvement in the club?;* and *What role does the club play in the broader context of the older club-goer's life?.* Here I have considered, firstly, the main mechanisms of social capital production observed – the place-based mechanisms such as physical and organisational features of the Langley Club, and the network-based mechanisms of network structure and function. The second way in which this chapter answered these questions was to consider some of the outcomes of club-based social capital by looking at the facilitation of resource access and outcomes related to social connectedness.

The title of this thesis, *Meat-trays, marginalisation and the mechanisms of social capital creation*, reflects the thesis' interpretation of the nature, meaning and role of the older club-goers' club participation. *Meat-trays* represents the outcome of facilitation of resource access; meat-trays featured in the findings as a way that club-goers managed food acquisition and finances in the context of threats to these and other aspects of everyday life. Meat-trays were also used by older people to maintain equality in exchange with friends, and, more significantly, with adult children. The capacity to reciprocate with friends and family – and thereby maintain control and autonomy - is threatened when the capacity to access resources needed for reciprocal interaction may be reduced. The reciprocity symbolised by *meat-trays* was one crucial element in the relationships with family, friends, casual interactants and the club itself which made up the components of club-based networks.

The *marginalisation* of this thesis' title represents the social connectedness outcomes which were found in addition to resource facilitation outcomes. Managing marginalisation was proposed as an outcome which incorporated the solidarity benefits resulting from the bonding social capital in the homogeneous networks, as well as the benefits of participating in a mainstream social setting – a preferred type of participation for many older people to those age (and class and gender) segregated settings which are its alternative.

The *mechanisms of social capital creation* of the thesis title refers to the processes that operate in this setting to create social capital. Mechanisms were both place- and network-based. Place-based mechanisms generally do not receive much attention from social capital theorists. The attention given to context in this study – made possible by its ethnographic methodology using participant observation over several years - enables the identification of processes which created community, solidarity and, hence, bonding social capital. Social network-based mechanisms were both structural and functional and incorporated aspects of network structure and function well-known to be related to social capital, such as diversity, size and density (structural features) and reciprocity and norms (functional features).

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

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This study was conducted in order to fill a gap in the literature on the social participation of older Australians. It is, to my knowledge, the first ethnography of a registered club to be conducted since Caldwell's (1972) important study of Canberra's Southern Cross Club, and is the first study to address - in depth - the participation of older club-goers. Russell (1996), in the context of older men's use of registered clubs, observed that:

> It is clear that such facilities remain a central focus in the lives of this cohort of retired blue collar men … yet this domain of Australian … social life does not appear to have been subject to systematic social research (Russell, 1996, p.53-4).

A possible reason for this lack of research is that Australian researchers and policy makers have not considered registered clubs to be worthy of serious attention (Lynch & Veal, 2006). Becker (1998) points to "an uninspected credo which held that, when you studied one of the major social institutions, you studied a really "good" one so that you could see what made it good" (p.94). Social gerontological research is itself subject to "prescriptive" and "elitist assumptions" (Ginn & Arber, 1995); what is considered "appropriate, normal, and healthy" pastimes for older people is seen through a middle-class lens (Katz, 2000), counting out working-class activities such as registered club participation.

From these normative perspectives, social institutions which count as "good" include age-segregated organisations catering specifically to older people, such as the University of the Third Age (Hendy & Hooker, 1993). The findings of this study suggest, however, that older people benefit from participating in age-_heterogeneous_ organisations - particularly if opportunities for age-_homogeneous_ peer grouping within that age-_heterogeneous_ organisation are also available.

The view that registered clubs are not "good" social institutions is not, however, shared by these working class older club-goers themselves. Club-goers usually were puzzled when I

asked whether their club-going might have been perceived negatively by others; suggesting that they were comfortable with the legitimacy of this social institution.

Being unaffected by (or unaware of) a wider perception of club-use as lacking legitimacy points to the possibility that older club-goers are, in some ways, insulated from the mainstream. Further evidence of this in this study was that some club-goers appeared to have given little thought to their status - marginal or otherwise - in the wider community. Perhaps this is an issue which is simply not relevant to their lives. If such a mechanism is in operation, this would suggest that club-going (seen, by some, as a 'way of life') is a type of 'sub-world' (Lindesmith, Strauss & Denzin, 1975) in which older club-goers are "bound together by networks of communication or universes of discourse and … share perspectives on reality" (Parke, 2002). Sub-worlds are, almost by definition, marginal, so that this, once again, calls into question the integration of working class older people (older club-goers, at least) into the wider society.

Some Implications of the Findings

As this study has been unique in investigating older people's experience of registered club participation, it may be that it has also generated unique insights. I hope that the findings of this study can make a useful contribution to organisations that are concerned with the social participation and social integration of older people in Australia. I see some implications of these findings for the registered club industry and for people who make policies, or design services, for older people.

Implications for the Registered Club Industry

As evidenced by the huge club participation rate of older people (ABS, 2007) and the fact that these rates remain high well into old age (Baum et al., 2000b), registered clubs have a unique and important role to play in the lives of older Australians. This research indicates that, for this group of working class older men and women, club use was a major contributor to maintaining social participation and to the effective management of everyday life. Australia's population is ageing, and in that context, registered club participation may increase in importance.

A tightening regulatory environment has resulted in changes in many registered clubs which potentially threatens older members' participation and sense of belonging (PC,

1999). This research has shown that the responses to these challenges by one particular club, the Langley Ex-Services and Community Club, have had the effect of marginalising some of its membership. Given the importance of club-going to this group - arguably more important than for other age and class groups - registered club management needs to carefully consider the impact of changes on this part of their membership.

It seems likely that registered clubs are contributors to social capital, particularly at the community level and in the lives of individual members. The continued capacity of clubs to contribute to the production of social capital depends on their fostering horizontal social connections between their users, and links into the wider community. This is because it is the quantity and (more importantly) the quality of these connections that are the substrate of club-based social capital. Practices within clubs which are increasingly 'commodifying membership' (Grenier & Wright, 2003) are putting these connections at risk.

Clubs can also contribute to the building of social capital by continuing to host activities that provide opportunities for self-reliance and self-direction. These opportunities may include bingo games which may (on the basis of these findings) facilitate reciprocity by, for example, enabling older people to obtain resources which can be utilised in managing daily life and assisting social network members.

Implication for Ageing Policy and Service Provision

In elucidating aspects of the club's contribution to social participation and everyday life, this research may assist ageing-related policy and practice to better address policy objectives. The National Strategy for an Ageing Australia has laid out the government's ageing agenda, with particular focus on "policies that encourage and support the participation of older Australians in all aspects of our society" (Andrews, 2002). This is consonant with the United Nations which has affirmed the right of older people to "enjoy a life of fulfilment, health, security and active participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of their societies." (United Nations, 2002. p.2). Programs and policies which encourage social participation are, therefore, important for older people.

This research has brought to light a type of social participation which has remained hidden to policy makers and service providers, who have tended to focus on programs and services which develop and maintain age-segregated facilities (such as senior citizens clubs and centre-based day care centres). The findings of this research suggest, however, that progress towards these policy goals may be better achieved through facilitating access by

older people to mainstream services - while at the same time providing structures to support peer grouping of older people within those structures.

Some implications can be drawn for older people's organisations in particular. This research has identified factors which underpin the establishment and development of older people's relationships in an associational setting. These factors included the provision of activities and other opportunities which facilitated social interaction. A particular problem for the organisers of groups for older people is that the groupings are not generally attractive to older men (Russell, 2007a). Davidson et al. (2003) recommend that "policy changes are needed to make Day Centres, Luncheon Clubs and other clubs specifically aimed at older people more congenial for older men" (Davidson et al., 2003, p.88). This study has identified a number of ways in which older men were able to participate which may be applicable in other settings.

Another aspect of the findings which may be useful in other settings is the description of mechanisms of social capital creation. In recent years, it has become an aim of government policy to "build or support" social capital (PC, 2003, p.IX), – a process which is believed to have particular benefits for older people (Cannuscio et al., 2003; Stone, 2003a; Maynard & Kleiber, 2005; Barr & Russell, 2006 Russell, Campbell & Hughes, 2008). Features which function as mechanisms for social capital creation have been described in detail in this study. To the extent that settings can incorporate certain aspects of these physical, organisational and other features, social capital creation may be facilitated in those other settings.

Some Suggestions for Future Research

There is little published research into registered club use in later life. Larger scale quantitative research could shed light on patterns of older people's social use of clubs, and how clubs are used as a resource in the context of limited resources. Further qualitative research, addressing mechanisms of social capital creation and outcomes of club participation, could extend the understanding developed here, which, in not initially addressing these questions, has provided only limited answers.

Some other issues remain unresolved by the findings and could be addressed by future research. These issues include: What is an appropriate conceptualisation of, and explanation for, the co-existence of both positive outcomes (such as cohesiveness and

sense of belonging) and negative outcomes (such as stigmatisation) in age-homogeneous settings?   How can the benefits of peer grouping and mainstream participation be maximised in this and similar contexts? In building on the findings from this study, future research can improve our understanding of what is an important, yet neglected, aspect of the lives of a substantial proportion of Australia's older population.

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APPENDIX A

This initial theoretical sampling frame was developed to support my application to the University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee. It was based on an early review of the literature, but changes, substantially when I began collecting data.

Based on my reading of the literature up to that point, I had included the following dimensions: male/female; with/without family support; young-old/old-old; married/not married:

Gender	Contact with Adult Children	Age	Marital status	Number of subjects
Male	Frequent	<75	Married	N=1
Male	Frequent	<75	Widowed	N=1
Male	Frequent	75+	Married	N=1
Male	Frequent	75+	Widowed	N=1
Male	Infrequent	<75	Married	N=1
Male	Infrequent	<75	Widowed	N=1
Male	Infrequent	75+	Married	N=1
Male	Infrequent	75+	Widowed	N=1
Female	Frequent	<75	Married	N=1
Female	Frequent	<75	Widowed	N=1
Female	Frequent	75+	Married	N=1
Female	Frequent	75+	Widowed	N=1
Female	Infrequent	<75	Married	N=1
Female	Infrequent	<75	Widowed	N=1
Female	Infrequent	75+	Married	N=1
Female	Infrequent	75+	Widowed	N=1
				Total = 16

APPENDIX B

COPY

University of Sydney
Sydney N.S.W. 2006
Human Ethics Committee
Room N420, Main Quad A14
Telephone (02) 9351 4811 Fax (02) 9351 6706

Dr C Russell
School of Community Health
Faculty of Health Sciences
C42

12 December 1997

Dear Dr Russell,

The Human Ethics Committee at its meeting on 8 December 1997 considered your protocol:

Title: The Registered Club in the lives of older men and women: an ethnographic study

Ref No: 97/12/34

The Committee will give your protocol final consideration, when it receives your response to the following:

The Committee presumes that the researchers will obtain permission from the licensed club in question and seeks confirmation from the club in writing that it is happy for the research to proceed.

The Committee had some concerns about the method of recruitment namely, informal approaches during a participant observation phase. It seeks further information on the precise details of this recruitment. It may be that recruitment by advertisement within the club would be a method of recruitment that could be less apparently coercive or influential.

Please send your reply to Ms Gail Briody, Manager of Ethics & Biosafety Administration, Human Ethics Committee, Room N420, Main Quad A14.

Yours sincerely,

Dr J D G Watson
Chairman
Human Ethics Committee

c.c. Ms V Simpson-Young, School of Community Health, Faculty of Health Sciences

APPENDIX C

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE
The University of Sydney
Room N420 Main Quad A14
Sydney 2006

Tel: (02) 9351.4811   Fax: (02) 9351.6706   E-mail: gail@reschols.usyd.edu.au

Dr C Russell
School of Community Health
Faculty of Health Sciences
C42

1 June 1998

Dear Dr Russell,

Title: *The registered club in the lives of older men and women : an ethnographic study*

Ref No: *97/12/34*

Thank you for your correspondence dated 7th May 1998 addressing comments made to you by the Committee.

After considering the additional information relating to the above protocol, it was the Committee's opinion that there were no ethical objections to the project, and therefore recommends approval to proceed.

The additional information will be filed with your application.

The procedures outlined in the protocol must be adhered to.

Please note:
(1) The Subject Information Sheet and Consent Form must be on University of Sydney letterhead and must include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers.

(2) The following statement must appear on the Subject Information Sheet:
Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics and Biosafety Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.

(3) The standard University policy concerning storage of data should be followed. While temporary storage of audio-tapes at the researcher's home or an off-campus site is acceptable during the active transcription phase of the project, permanent storage should be at a secure, University controlled site for a minimum of five years.

Approval for the protocol is given on the understanding that you will return the "Report Form - Monitoring of Research", which will be provided by Committee, as a progress report on your research by no later than **31 December 1998.**

Approval has been given for one year and renewal is contingent upon the provision of the progress report.

Yours sincerely

Ms Gail Briody
Manager - Biosafety & Ethics Administration

APPENDIX D
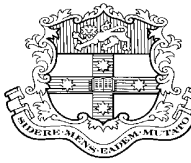
The University of Sydney
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Community Health

20th January 1998

[addressee's identifying details removed]

Dear [identifying details removed],

You may recall our discussion after the AGM in September last year when [the President] suggested I speak to you about the research project I would like to conduct at the Langley Club. I am writing now to ask for written permission to undertake that research.

The research project is intended to find out more about older men and women's participation in Registered Clubs, and what it means to them in their lives. This will be achieved by doing an in-depth ethnographic study of one particular Club. I am envisaging that my role would be to participate in the normal activities of the Club available to me as a member. I would make it known to the members with whom I interact that I am a researcher and I would discuss the nature of the research with them. At some time in the project I hope to do in-depth interviews with people I have met at the Club. These interviews are of a general conversational nature, rather than being questionnaire-based. I will, of course, get their written consent using the form which I have attached for your information.

As we discussed in September, if at some stage I wanted to change the nature of the research in relation to the Club, I would, of course, discuss the matter with you first.

Yours faithfully,

VIRGINIA SIMPSON-YOUNG

APPENDIX E

30th April 1998

Dr R. Rothwell
Head of School
The University of Sydney
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Community Health
PO Box 170
LIDCOMBE NSW 2141

Dear Sir,

I refer to your letter and our consequent meeting with Ms Virginia Simpson-Young and Dr Cherry Russell on Tuesday 28th April.

I advise that we are happy to participate, and also Ms Virginia Simpson-Young to carry out her research project in the Club.

The meeting was very enlightening and informative and we are sure the results will be very beneficial to all concerned.

Yours sincerely,

[Identifying details removed]

Deputy General Manager   **President**

[Identifying club details removed]

APPENDIX F

The University of Sydney
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Community Health

INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____ hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the research entitled:

The Registered Club in the lives of older men and women: an ethnographic study

conducted by: Dr Cherry Russell and Virginia Simpson-Young

I understand that the information obtained from this research may be used in future research, and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, ie: personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the attached information sheet has been explained to me and I understand what is expected of me and the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without this being held against me.
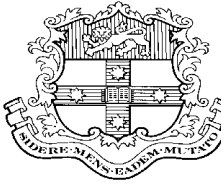
I have been familiarised with the procedure.

Signed by Subject: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____(Name)

                          _____(Signature)

                          _____(Date)

APPENDIX G

The University of Sydney
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Community Health

8th June 1998

Research study into the Registered Club in the lives of older men and women: an ethnographic study

Information for Participants

You are invited to take part in a research study. The objective of the study is to discover more about older people's experiences of participating in Registered Clubs.

The study is being conducted by Dr Cherry Russell (Senior Lecturer) and Virginia Simpson-Young (post-graduate student), from the School of Community Health at the University of Sydney. The interviews will be conducted by Virginia.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for about one to one and a half hours, in your own home or somewhere else that is convenient to you. The conversation will be recorded on audio or video tape, again with your permission. You will be free to stop the interview at any time, you can ask for the tape recorder or camera to be turned off at any time and you can request that all or sections of the tape be erased.

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the investigators named above will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are in no way obliged to participate and--if you do participate--you can withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice.

When you have read this information, Virginia will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Dr Russell (9351 9129). This information sheet is for you to keep.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney. Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research study should contact the Manager of Ethics and Biosafety Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.

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APPENDIX H

Biographical Sketch: Eileen

Eileen is the daughter of Ruby, and I interviewed them both because I wanted to find out about the mother-daughter relationship etc (see Ruby bio box). Eileen was one of the first people I met when I started my fieldwork, as I sat at the same table her during my first bingo game. We met on several occasions after that, and when I mentioned to her that I had arranged an interview with her mother, she made it clear that she would also be interested in being interviewed.

Eileen, aged 68 at the time of the interview, grew up in an outer suburb of Sydney with her mother Ruby, father and younger brother. She moved to Norbank when she married Ken, whom she met on a holiday when she was in her late twenties. Ken's death five years prior to the interview had prompted Eileen to ask her mother to relocate from the Central Coast to join her and her son, who still lived at home. Eileen, in addition to the son who lives with her, has two daughters who live in regional New South Wales.

Eileen had been in paid employment for most of her adult life, and her recent retirement from a shop after twenty years has not resulted in her slowing down. She described her home as "like Pitt Street here sometimes", as she was frequently being visited as part of a business she has started running from home.

Eileen is passionate about "geography", and loves to travel as much as possible, taking regular overseas trips with various friends. She attends the club for bingo once a week, taking her mother, Ruby and her neighbour, Pauline, in her car.

Biographical Sketch: Giselle

Giselle, now in her sixties, moved to Australia from India with her husband about seven years prior to the research period to be closer to the four of their five children who were living in Australia. Her husband died several months before my first contact with her. Giselle had started coming to the club only recently – three months after the death of her husband. Although when I first met her she was there with a man and woman, who were friends visiting her from India, Giselle generally comes to the club alone. On the fourth occasion in which I had observed or interacted with Giselle, I recorded in my fieldnotes:

I had seen Giselle sitting by herself outside at one of the little tables when I went to the bathroom, sometime before bingo started. She had not minded herself a spot yet. She looked very lonely, and I couldn't work out why she was there. Soon after coming to our table, I tried to get her attention to say hello, and it was difficult. It was only when I introduced myself to the person sitting between Giselle and me that I was able to get her attention. I said, "Hi, I'm sorry I've forgotten your name". She said, somewhat reproachfully: "I'm remember *your's* - Virginia". She then reminded me of her name. I felt a bit bad, because I should have remembered her name. I hope I redeemed myself later when I remembered (and was able to drop into the conversation) the fact that she had five kids, four of whom lived in Australia. She rarely smiled, and I wonder if she is depressed. It isn't long at all since her husband died (about six months) so I wouldn't be surprised (fieldnote 15)

Two years after she started at the club, I saw her waving to another woman of South Asian appearance who joined her in a health promotion activity in which Giselle and I were independently taking part. I did not conduct a formal interview with Giselle, but rather communicated with her during seven field trips over a two year period.

Biographical Sketch: Mary

The sixth time I played bingo, I met Mary, aged 89, who allowed me to sit at the place she had been minding with a bingo marker. We discussed recipes and several weeks later she arranged for a more mobile bingo player than herself to deliver a recipe for Spanish Cream to my bingo table. On many subsequent occasions, Mary and I sat at the same table at bingo, and spoke during breaks and also in the Lounge where the 'pokies' were being played.

After two years of participant observation, I asked Mary for a formal interview. Mary told me about her life. She was born in the north-west of England. When she was about eight months old, she went to live with her grandmother because her parents were moving to the United States, where two younger sisters were subsequently born. Mary did not see her sisters until she was eight years old when her mother brought them home from America, on the death of their father.

After leaving school a week before her fourteenth birthday, Mary was apprenticed to a dress-maker. She earned her living this way until she officially retired on coming to Australia (she thinks that dress-making, as well as handcrafts, may have contributed to her serious neck problem which is the main cause of a significant mobility impairment at this later stage of her life).

At some point before or during the Great Depression Mary married Alf, whom she describes as "always full of fun". Alf was out of work during the Great Depression, but got work after WWII in the shipyards and "he never was out of work after that". During WWII Mary's job was to take care of the old people during air raids. Her husband was a "firewatcher". She and Alf had one child, a boy - she "hadn't time to have a family". Her son now has two grown boys of his own and lives in the UK.

When her son was still a baby, Mary's grandmother became ill and Mary went to live with her and, in what appears to have been a labour of love, "looked after her until she died". While caring for her grandmother, Mary was continuing to look after her husband and son – a burden which eventually took its toll upon her health, and she reluctantly committed her grandmother to the "workhouse". After her grandmother's death, Mary was much more free, and remembers trips to the seaside with big groups and friends and their families:

> In them days, we had real good fine weather, too. Used to be beautiful ...
> They were happy days (Mary interview)

When Mary was aged about 60 years old her husband died, and six years later she took the advice of her sister who was living in Australia that her "pension would go further", and she migrated. After staying with her sister and her husband for four years, she finally took a housing commission unit in South Rowley where she stayed for 22 years. When the steps became too difficult, she moved to another Department of Housing unit, which is closer to the club.

A typical week for Mary involves three outings. On Monday and Tuesday she goes to the Langley Club, and on Friday she goes to Langley Adult Day Group. On Wednesday the doctor and pharmacist come. Thursday is "a very busy day", with visits from Home Care (shopping and cleaning), the hairdresser and Meals on Wheels.

This is what Mary does on a typical bingo day: "I get up at seven o'clock, because it takes me roundabout two hours to get ready. Takes me ages to get a shower and get dressed, make the bed and then come and get my breakfast." She phones a taxi at nine am, and

then walks up to the street to wait for it. She arrives at the Club before 9:30, and sits and talks with friends while she waits for Bingo to start at 10:30. Mary's sister attends bingo on Monday, but they do not sit together, although they do on Tuesdays.

Mary plays the 'pokies' after Bingo and then on Mondays she has lunch with her friend, Olive, while on Tuesdays she has lunch with her sister. She may play the pokies for a while longer. Then she goes home by taxi.

Biographical Sketch: Maurie

Maurie was the second formal interview I did. I had previously interviewed Mary, and in order to sample for maximum variation, I was now looking for someone as different as possible from Mary in a number of respects. It seemed wise to look for a man (possibly "young-old") who played the poker machines, or at least frequented the Lounge area. I reported in my fieldnotes how the interview came about:

> I saw a grey haired man from behind, sitting alone, beer, appearing not to be watching the Keno or Sky Sports screens. I figured he was old enough to be of interest to my research by his general appearance and the fact that he was here in the daytime on a weekday - suggesting he may be retired. I approached him, and briefly told him my intentions. He offered to buy me a drink. I declined (fieldnote 40)

Maurie, aged 67, migrated to Australia from Northern Ireland with his wife when they were in their mid-thirties. They settled in a suburb adjacent to Langley where they raised their four children. They have recently moved from the family home to a new house in a western suburb of Sydney – a preference of his wife's but not his: "My wife, particularly, was the strong one who wanted to leave". This has situated them well in relation to their children:

> We're right in the middle of them - centre of gravity of the four locations (Maurie interview).

Maurie had had "a pretty responsible job" as an electrical engineer, and retired about ten years prior to the research period. His wife had had an administrative job, and was also retired.

Each fortnight, Maurie and his wife park at the Albion Leagues Club and take the train into town to run some errands. On their return, they stop in at Langley Club. Maurie's wife plays the poker machines, and Maurie usually runs into some friends and has a few beers with them:

> I just look forward to maybe running into a friend, I was expecting to run into one today here, or a couple of them today.... maybe sit for about an hour, an hour and a half (Maurie interview)

Maurie had played the poker machines in the past, but swore off them some years ago. Maurie is close to his wife and "sees quite a lot" of his children and grandchildren.

Biographical Sketch: Myra

On the occasion that I interviewed Myra, I had come to the club to try to find a woman who did not play bingo and who, preferably, did play the poker machines. This is because I had already interviewed some female bingo players and some male non-bingo players. I note in my fieldnotes:

> On my arrival at the club that morning, I had a little wander around to see what was happening, ending up back in the foyer area. At one table outside the coffee shop I saw an older woman drinking a cappuccino bought from the coffee shop. I saw her get up, cross the foyer and ask a man waiting outside the pub if she could have his ash-tray. I approached her quickly as soon as she returned to her seat. She was alone, and wasn't minding a seat for anyone else (fieldnote 42)

Myra, aged 67, grew up on Sydney's lower north shore, and moved to a suburb near Langley when she married. Her husband, a bank manager, died young at age 43, when their only child, a daughter, was only 13 years old. She is still upset about it today.

After her husband's death, Myra took on part-time then full-time sales and clerical work, retiring at age 60. Although lacking any obvious disability, Myra experienced some functional limitations after recent quadruple bypass surgery. She has a pace-maker inserted, has had a carotid artery done, and was operated on for bowel cancer a year prior to the interview.

When her husband died, Myra moved to the Central Coast from Sydney, but she didn't enjoy living there. When her mother in Sydney got sick, she came back to live with her in Langley, where she stayed until her mother died. When her daughter and husband moved into the area, she moved in with them, and has been there for the last 12 months.

Myra described at least four good friends with whom she keeps in regular contact; none of them attend the club. She comes to the club with her daughter and her daughter's husband in the evening for dinner on occasions. Myra comes on her own to the club once or twice a week to have lunch and to play the poker machines.

Myra brought the interview to an end after about 25 minutes. After responding to the following question from me:

> *Virginia*: Do you think you'd like to stay coming to this club? For as long as you can?
>
> *Myra:* Oh yes, mmm, well, you look at it, you know, its clean, its really lovely. I'm going to go in and spend a few bob next door (Myra interview)

Biographical Sketch: Olive

Olive was aged around 85 years old at the time of the research, although she could easily have passed for 70. It was after the interview with Mary in which I heard about their relationship, that I considered interviewing her, although it was to be a year before the interview took place. Olive grew up in a small village in England with a father who worked in the local armoury and a mother who looked after Olive and her four brothers. Olive had worked as a typist, but stopped fulltime work when she married, at age 22. Her first husband was killed while fighting in WWII ("the bottom dropped out right out of my world, Virginia, …I thought I'd never get over it.") when their two sons were only two years and five months old. Five years after the death of her first husband, Olive married Peter, a gasfitter and widower, and they had one child, Janne. They were married for 25 years, then he died of cancer.

Olive did some part time work when her children were at school, but didn't work fulltime again until Janne was 17, making Olive about 50, at which time she took up typing at the Dockyards, a job she kept until her retirement aged 65. It was then that she moved to Australia to be with her Janne who had married an Australian.

Olive's contact with her oldest son had been infrequent for some years, and he has since died. She has monthly telephone conversations with her other son who still lives in the UK. Olive is close to Janne with whom she lived when she first came to Australia. Although Olive now lives in a small one bedroom self-care unit in a retirement village, she sees Janne about once a week, and stays at their home for the weekend on occasions.

Olive's health is good and she is very socially active. In addition to club –going, she has frequent interaction with a variety of friends, going to theatre and opera, and to dinner or the movies. She often goes out with Janne and her husband, as well as seeing Janne's friends. She likes to read, does cryptic crosswords and watches TV (she likes Quiz shows).

Olive takes a short walk to the club through a pleasant park each Monday to play bingo and have lunch with Mary, who is also English. Olive and Mary usually sit at the same bingo table each week. After bingo, Mary and Olive have lunch together then play the poker machines, before walking back home. Apart from Monday's bingo sessions, Olive comes to the club on occasions with Janne and her husband, as well as to meet friends. She also attends some activities at other clubs such as the Ladies Day at the Albion Leagues Club.

I was interested in interviewing Olive because she was a close associate of Mary, whom I had interviewed early on, and Mary had spoken often about Olive. I had by this stage adopted the strategy of getting different perspectives on people's club use and by collecting data from complementary sources. To arrange the interview, I approached Olive who was having lunch with Mary. I requested an interview, appealing to Mary to verify that it would not be too arduous or unpleasant. Olive agreed readily to the interview, which took place in her home several days later.

Biographical Sketch: Pauline

Pauline was aged 63 at the time of the interview. She lives alone in the family home, with a large dog to keep her company, as her two sons in their early twenties no longer live at home. She reports that her health is still good ("I haven't crossed that bridge yet, really, Virginia").

Her early years were spent in a number of different NSW country towns as her father was in the Post Office, finally settling in Sydney's inner west until her marriage at age 27 soon after which she moved to Norwood. Pauline's husband, Bernard, who had worked as a

handyman, was 57 when he died, two years before the interview. She is satisfied with her relationship with her two sons, but is concerned about aspects of their lifestyle ("They both drink too much, Virginia"), which has landed one of them into trouble with the law. Pauline had been a telephonist at the GPO, a job which she had enjoyed, before stopping work to raise her children.

Pauline attends Bingo on Mondays and Tuesdays when Eileen, her next door neighbour, is able to drive her. She doesn't seem to do any other set activities; although she shops at a nearby shopping centre with Eileen ("I usen't even to go shopping…. [my husband] did all that"). She is thinking about joining the travel club. "I might, I might".   Also does "reading and gardening", "and the dog's great company". She doesn't watch TV much, only just worked out how to turn it on, having relied entirely on her husband for this and other tasks.

Prior to her husband's death, Pauline did not get out of the house much ("I was glued here answering the telephone all the time" for his business), including not attending clubs ("not that I had anything against clubs").

It was only when Eileen suggested Pauline accompany her to the club (a "couple of months" after Bernard's death) that she began to start to get out and about after her husband's death, recognising a need to adjust to her changed circumstances. She says:

> Well, that's what one of my friends said 'it's a different path you've
> gotta walk now, Pauline … But I'm one of the lucky ones that I can read
> and I've taken up reading, I look at it that way (Pauline interview)

Pauline likes going to the club mainly because she enjoys the game of bingo and although she is "friendly" with other bingo players, this is not a prime motivation. She identifies other attractions of the club: "I don't mind putting a decent outfit on to go there, to me that's something", "Gives you something to get dressed up for", and "We even have the door opened for us, if we come in the front door sometimes".

Biographical Sketch: Peggy

I had known Peggy, aged in her mid-seventies, for two years before approaching her for an interview. I had on several occasions sat with her and her husband, Clarrie, at Bingo, had seen her at another local club, and even run into her at the local doctor's surgery. On one visit to the club, I saw Peggy alone and, it being very unusual for her to be without Clarrie,

I suspected that he may have died. A further, and more compelling, reason for suspecting this is that she had developed a severe facial tic, I recorded:

> Her worsened condition was one thing which led me to suspect that Clarrie had died. I thought that an interview with Peggy would be ideal for looking at the issue of widowhood and club-going. I felt that, even though she would probably still be grieving, that I knew her well enough to ask for an interview (fieldnote 43)

 I had data relating to Clarrie and Peggy from a two year period before Clarrie's death and an interview with Peggy at this stage would enable me to go beyond verbal reports of recalled past events.

Peggy has lived in the Langley area since she was four years old. After attending various local schools, she trained to be a calculator operator, and then worked at a department store where she did the wages. Peggy was in charge of her whole section at age 17. She stopped work when her first child was born. She didn't work again, because Clarrie didn't want her to.

Peggy met Clarrie when he left the army after WWII. They didn't marry immediately because Peggy felt she was too young. Clarrie went and worked in the country, and when he came back in 1951, they married. They were married for 48 years. They lived in Rowley for seven years, and then moved to their current home which they built themselves. They had three children and at the time of the interview, Peggy was accommodating her daughter's family while they were building a new house.

Clarrie had been a public servant in a senior management role, and was also secretary of the South Rowley RSL Sub-Branch. Clarrie and Peggy's main allegiance is to the South Rowley RSL. I spoke with Clarrie on many occasions at the club and he provided me with many insights into the experience of club participation. I was sad to hear that he had died, aged about 78.

Peggy's pattern of club use has changed since the death of Clarrie. Now on Mondays she spends time with Judy, sometimes at Langley bingo and sometimes at clubs in Judy's neighbourhood. On Tuesday, she may have morning tea at South Rowley RSL with her daughter, followed by shopping. Some Tuesdays she attends a half-price dinner night at South Rowley, with a friend or with one of her children and their families. On Wednesdays, she usually does something else at South Rowley, although this is not a regular activity.

On Thursdays, she shops with her other daughter. On Friday, she attends bingo at Albion Leagues, and on Saturday, she has what she calls her "fun day" at South Rowley Club.

Peggy enjoys playing the poker machines and plays from her "kick" - a fund she keeps especially for the purpose, never adding to it or taking away from it except through the poker machines.

Biographical Sketch: Ruby

I heard about Ruby during my very first visit to the club for bingo. Although she was not at Bingo on that occasion, I met her daughter, Eileen, who told me that her mother, aged over 90, lived with her. She said that her mother had until recently played bingo five days a week and still travels once a week from Norbank to the Central Coast to play bingo there. Some time later, I was to hear more about Ruby from the bingo hostess, Sharon, who told me how Ruby would walk several kilometres to the club for bingo twice a week. On the following visit to the club I sat with Ruby at bingo. After that I regularly spoke with her on the occasions when I was not sitting at the same table. I was not to interview her, however, for another three years.

Ruby was born in New Zealand, and came to Australia in 1930 with her husband, Edward, to witness the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. When the Depression struck they found themselves without the necessary means to return to New Zealand, and they made Australia their home, living in initially an inner city suburb. Ruby and Edward experienced a lot of hardship during the Great Depression, often fishing for food, and she recalls the kindness of a butcher who would sometimes give them "a parcel of chops". After the Great Depression, Ruby worked fulltime as a tailoress, while managing a young family. A son was born nine years after Eileen when they had moved to a home which they built themselves in an outer Sydney suburb.

After 25 years in Sydney, Ruby stopped working as a tailoress, and she and Edward purchased 140 acres of crown land on the NSW Central Coast and began farming - an occupation in which they both had some experience in New Zealand, and which made use of Edward's carpentry skills. They fenced the land, built dams, a home and other buildings. They had "pigs, ducks and chooks".

The farm was sold just before Ruby and Edward went interstate for a holiday, where Edward died aged in his mid-sixties. At that time, Ruby went to live with her son who,

after living on the farm with them, had recently built his own house in town. Some time later, when Ruby was aged 81 and her son and his family moved away, Ruby took a Housing Commission unit in a Central Coast town. She continues to visit her son in April and October each year. Seven years later, when Eileen was widowed, Ruby accepted her invitation to come and live in Norbank with Eileen and Eileen's son who was still living at home.

Ruby says of her health that she is "doing <u>very</u> well", and has outlived her four siblings. She has rarely seen doctors. She tries to stay active, particularly by walking, and regularly walks around the local area, as well as to the club and train station. She is now blind in one eye (which she reports "hasn't affected me at all") after an infection following a cataract removal a year before the interview. She has some trouble sleeping, as she has for many years, but refuses sleeping tablets. She attributes her excellent recovery from hip replacement surgery to the fact that she does twice as many of the physiotherapy exercises as she was given, and the only thing she can not easily do is to get down on the floor.

Ruby's main activity is bingo which she plays two days a week at the Langley Club. One day a week she travels back to the Central Coast to play bingo and to meet old friends. She "never touches" the poker machines ("they were put there to make money for the <u>club</u> so what chance have <u>you</u> got?").   She likes to read, especially paperback romance novels which she trades with her next door neighbour and friends. As her husband had been in the services during WWII, Ruby is taken to Legacy lunches three times a year.

I had always wanted to interview Ruby, and the opportunity arose when I chose to focus on the social networks which existed at Bingo. One clear example of such a network was Ruby, Eileen and neighbour Pauline.   Ruby and Eileen agreed on the same day to be interviewed. Eileen organised the times for interviews with both herself and her mother. When I was interviewing Eileen, we received a visit from Pauline and I asked her for an interview as well. Ruby's in-depth interview took place in her home, with Eileen being there for the beginning of the interview, then leaving to go shopping.

Biographical sketch: Thea

I met Thea on only one occasion, and approached her quickly for an interview. My last two interviews had been of men who did not play bingo, and I had been looking for women in this category. On this visit to the club I had interviewed Myra who fitted this category, but

as she had terminated the interview prematurely, I wanted to find someone else in this category. Thea was sitting alone drinking coffee. I knew she wasn't a bingo player because I hadn't seen her at bingo. On this basis alone I thought she would be appropriate to approach for an interview. I also considered other sampling possibilities, however, to do with class. I recorded in my fieldnotes:

> I saw a woman sitting alone with a coffee and a crossword. She looked late 60s or early 70s. Grey hair cut in a bob. She was slim. I didn't notice her clothes, but her overall appearance was one of a very different social class from the typical club goer. … When I spoke with her, I thought that her voice was very gentle and refined. There were traces of an English accent. Her apparent difference from other club-goers raised the issue of whether I should talk to someone who is unlikely to be representative, but then I realised that this would be a strength as well. Also, that I had been deceived by the appearance of people before. I was then curious to talk to her (fieldnote 42)

So, Thea suited either of two possible directions I could take the research at that point. Either she was another woman who played poker machines and not bingo, or she was a "negative case" in terms of the social class of the typical club-goer. As I had not known Thea previously I didn't ask to interview her in her home, but conducted the interview in the club.

Thea was 67 years old (although she was a little reluctant to tell me her age). She is an artist, although she said that as she didn't make enough money to live on from her art, she couldn't consider herself a professional artist. Thea is currently married and lives with her husband in the family home in Langley. Thea has two grown children – a daughter in Sydney, with two children whom she often babysits for, and a son in Perth who has no children.

Thea was born in the United Kingdom, and moved to Australia when aged 23, largely to escape her emotionally demanding and mentally ill mother, although her mother followed two years later. She had done an art course in England, worked for a year, got married and had children. Her husband had been a fashion designer, then hire car owner/driver and is now retired. She went back to art school when her children were grown. She is actively involved with her daughter and her family, regularly babysitting her grandchildren.

Thea comes to the club once a week, usually Friday, on her way home from visiting her mother in a local nursing home. She usually has coffee and lunch in the café. She sometimes stays for the raffle, and plays five dollars on the poker machines, and then goes home. In the past, Thea and her husband had often gone to clubs for dinner with friends in the evenings, although not regularly. Thea is an active artist who produces her art in her own studio at home. She exhibits and sells her artwork.

Biographical Sketch: Tom

I did the interview with Tom in the Sports Bar area of the club one weekday morning. This was the second of two interviews which sought to get the perspective of a man who appeared to spend most of his time at the club alone. I was hoping at some point to have entrée to the Sports Bar which seemed to be a no-go zone for women who are on their own. When I saw Tom waiting for the Sports Bar to open, I thought he might provide that opportunity. This is how it happened:

> I saw a very old looking man sitting outside the pub, presumably waiting for it to open. He was doing a crossword puzzle in the morning tabloid. He was very thin, quite stooped, and had a walking stick and wool cap next to him. He wore gold-rimmed glasses and an old-fashioned tan leather jacket. I approached him, leaning solicitously over him and said: "My name's Virginia from the University of Sydney, I'm doing some research about older people and clubs, and I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions". Tom leant towards me, and then turned on his hearing aid. I don't remember what he said, but he seemed receptive. He said something which indicated that he didn't want to be too long because he was looking forward to his beer. After a while we went into the Pub. Tom suggested we sit near the bar. I thought he was too eager to drink, but then he said something which indicated that it was because he had difficulty walking (fieldnote 41)

Tom looked frail and was hard of hearing, and had a wound dressing above his eye which was the result of removal of his 16th skin cancer.   He had a congested cough, and was smoking. He attributed his stooped back to injuries sustained during his working life as a carpenter. When I suggest to him that he might be "winding down a bit perhaps?". He replies: "A: winding - oh, winding down quite a bit."

Tom had been born in rural South Australia. Throughout his life he remained very close to his one brother, who had been living with Tom and his wife until his death when Tom was aged about 70. This was the same year that Tom's wife died, and "that left me living alone".

Tom had fought in WWII, although he was somewhat reluctant to discuss it. He met his wife on the station ramp at Langley, and married in his late twenties. They had no children, although his wife had several late-term miscarriages. Tom's wife had had various jobs, including as a "governess" for the three children of a family in an exclusive suburb of Sydney.

Loss figured prominently in the interview with Tom. Three years before the interview, when maintaining the old family home became unmanageable:

> I didn't have enough money to fix it as it should be. The ceilings were pulling away from the walls… and there was black dust comin' down (Tom interview)

Tom moved to a self-care unit of a retirement village in an adjacent suburb. He sees the move as having been a big mistake:

> I haven't got too long to go anyhow so I should have stayed there … my mother and father died there, my brother died there and I should -er died there …but you can't do anything (Tom interview)

On at least five occasions Tom made reference to the death of old friends, and at others to the loss of valuables when he had been robbed by a carer who was supposed to be helping him while he recovered from surgery. He was also concerned about the prospect of his own death, and described events which had occurred on several occasions, which involved interactions with apparitions of a number of people who had died.

Tom has been a member of the club for many years, and was the second person to buy a drink over the bar after it had been renovated. Tom comes to the Club irregularly:

> Just when I feel like a walk…just when I feel like gettin' dressed (Tom interview)

Tom arrives at the club between 10 and 12, sits in the bar area and reads the newspaper, does the crossword, has a few beers and smokes. He has lunch "out and about", usually at the club. Sometimes he runs into friends at the club, and they have a beer together.

Not having children, and with the death of his only sibling and his wife, it seems that Tom has no family with whom he is in contact, nor is he interested in remarriage. His social life seems to consist entirely of the people he runs into at the club.